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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Using Lacan: Psychoanalysis, Marginality, Politics

BY

James D. Penney

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND FILM STUDIES

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
Fall, 1994

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ISBN 0-315-94887-6

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DEGREE: Master of Arts

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: 1994

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James D. Penney

11341 35th Avenue
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10 June, 1994

Je ne fais que ça depuis que j'ai vingt ans, explorer les philosophes sur le sujet de l'amour.

- Jacques Lacan

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Using Lacan: Psychoanalysis, Marginality, Politics* submitted by James D. Penney in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Nasrin Rahimieh

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Glenn Burger

1 June, 1994.

Abstract

Using Lacan: Psychoanalysis, Marginality, Politics attempts to elaborate the theoretical consequences of Lacanianism in relation to both feminism and queer theory. Although there has been a significant amount of work done in the last few decades on the ramifications of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory for the question of the constitution of women's subjectivities, few commentators have made further explorations into Lacan's intervention in the theorization of sexual object choice and 'homosexuality'. In addition, the feminist work on Lacan in the anglophone world has limited itself to a narrow range of Lacan's work, and has virtually ignored contributions to gender theory emerging from other members of *le champ freudien*. Thus, I attempt to integrate into my readings both that aspect of Lacan's teaching which has not been translated into English and the efforts of other members of the Lacanian circle who receive less or no attention in North America and Great Britain.

Through readings of Lacan's *Écrits* and *Séminaires*, the works of other Lacanians, and texts emblematizing the American reception of Lacan, coupled with textual analysis of contemporary cultural artifacts, I argue that Lacanian psychoanalysis provides the theoretical framework best suited to feminist and antihomophobic cultural intervention. Some of the notions explored for their political implications are the theory of the bodily ego, the repressed residue of narcissistic passion, the subject's interaction with the phallic signifier, the nature and function of the oedipal structure, and the acquisition of gender identity through the object relation. Emphasized throughout the text is the means by which psychoanalysis universalizes 'perversion': how the speaking subject in the defiles of the signifier is unable to accomplish the ideal of "genital love."

Using Lacan also takes account of the growing malaise with Lacanian theory currently made manifest by a number of theorists of gender and sexuality. Responding to both poststructuralist/ deconstructionist accounts of gender and the schizoanalytic/ antipsychiatric critique of Lacan, I argue that the only feasible means of gender subversion is one which takes into account the persistence of the object of gender. It is only by means of the admission of the necessary character of (the failure of) the gender binarism that its subversion is paradoxically rendered possible.

Acknowledgments

As is well known by anyone who has worked on a long project such as a thesis, one never proceeds alone. Consequently, notes of appreciation are in order. First, I would like to extend a note of gratitude to Nasrin Rahimieh, my advisor over the last year, who has always been extremely receptive to my ideas and a constant source of encouragement in my work. Second, thanks are due to Glenn Burger, whose brave course on gay male literature after Stonewall in the fall of 1993 was the origin of many theoretical and personal crises which contributed in one way or another to the present text. Third, I would like to extend a special thank you to Dianne Chisholm, whose seminar on Lacan is probably the most prominent non-textual intertext of the following pages, and whose intense and challenging intelligence has guided my intellectual development over the past two years. Other friends and peers whose names I would like to mention are Debra Shogan, Nina Erfani, Christopher Gibbins, and Adien Dubbelboer.

In addition, I must acknowledge at this point the indubitable presence of Kathryn Fraser in the most recent phase of my life, the subject from whom I was 'separated at birth'. Hers has been a presence which has filled my 'surplus' year in Edmonton with much more enjoyment than it would have otherwise featured.

Last but not least, I want to acknowledge a profound debt of gratitude to Codeine, the official pharmaceutical sponsor of this thesis, without which the author would have often succumbed, during the final stages, to excruciating TMJ flare-ups, and would doubtless have been left writhing on his bedroom floor.

Edmonton, May 1994

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Introduction

Among the Lacanians or, What's a Fag Doing in *le champ freudien*?[1]

> Can one be a neurotic and a psychoanalyst? What can a psychoanalyst hear and understand according to his own psychical structure? ... Can one be a homosexual and a psychoanalyst? Can one be mad and a psychoanalyst? And why not, after all, raise the question: Can one be a woman and a psychoanalyst? For women, this is tantamount to raising the question of the legitimacy of the social function of women, since, to be sure, it has never occurred to psychoanalysts to ask themselves: Can one be a man and a psychoanalyst?[2]

To write about Jacques Lacan in the mid 1990s is to implicitly, and in a more or less obligatory manner, position oneself in relation to the various currents of Lacanianism which have followed in the tumultuous wake of the great analyst's death in September, 1981. In North America, where the impact of Lacanianism in terms of psychoanalytic practice was until quite recently virtually non-existent, one finds oneself at a remove from the factional ill-feeling which resulted from Lacan's dissolution of the *École freudienne de Paris* shortly before his death. Still, a perceived aura of rigid dogmatism and blind faith is often automatically attibuted not only to self-professed Lacanian disciples, but to anyone who dares to write on the topic on the 'other side' of the Atlantic, at a distance from the official Millero-Lacanian circle.

One might even go so far as to say that the 'resistance' of some segments of the North American academy to Lacanianism may at least in part be attributed to a sense of alienation brought about by the impression of observers of the *champ freudien* that Lacan's life of teaching survives in an official manner only in the dogmatic circle of disciples worshipping at the 'church of Lacan'. Given the ethos of elitism surrounding the Lacanian legacy - the restrictive code-language of obscure mathemes, Möbius strips, and Borromean knots preferred by his followers, and the harshly autocratic politics adopted by the Millerian circle - one may safely say that these impressions should not surprise.

However fanatical the response to Lacan's death of some of the younger thinkers and practitioners either trained on his couch or familiar with his theoretical edifice, it should be noted that there is an advantage to be gained from a perspective on Lacanianism removed from the transferential politics of the Parisian analytic *milieu* and immune to the often fractious repercussions of theoretical pronouncement in the various analytic organizations. While the French analytic community is perhaps still too close, historically speaking, to the effects of the controversy which surrounded Lacan's relations to the

psychoanalytic establishment to deal with Lacanianism in a more detached manner, North American observers may benefit from the tranquilizing presence of institutional, disciplinary, and geographical boundaries.

This is not to say that analytic training, which I have not personally undergone, is not an integral part of any individual's grasp of psychoanalytic theory, particularly in its Lacanian incarnations; I would in fact maintain that it is probably essential. On this point, one of the blind spots of the response of the North American academic community to Lacanianism has been a pronounced underestimation of the inseparability of theory and practice where psychoanalysis is concerned. Still, to discount on experiential grounds the study of Lacanian theory by non-analysts is to perform a great disservice to the Lacanian legacy. While undoubtedly the most significant chunk of Lacan's inspiration for his theoretical elaborations derived in a direct fashion from the analyses performed in his office on the *rue de Lille*, it would be a foolhardy thing to stifle one of the (perhaps *the*) richest intellectual legacies of the twentieth century to the narrow sphere of therapeutic technique, and thereby ignore the manner in which Lacanianism *qua* philosophical system has already, and will continue, to revolutionize they way we think in a wide variety of fields.

One of the characteristics of the assimilation of Lacanianism on the North American continent has been a glaring lack of insight regarding the relation of the Lacanian schools to the wider social and political fields. On the 'liberal' campuses of North America, Lacan has been viewed in wildly disparate ways: as a sexually conservative interpreter of the letter of misogynistic Freudian texts; as a subversive and rebellious radical democrat bent on the dissolution of educational and institutional systems. Of course, as is usually the case in instances of pronounced disagreement, the truth lies somewhere in between the two claims. As far as historical fact is concerned, Elisabeth Roudinesco makes clear in her encyclopedic history of psychoanalysis in France the relation of both Lacan himself and Lacanian theory to the French political scene. While acutely critical throughout his lifetime of both the political institutionalization of communism in France and the Maoist revolutionaries of the *Gauche prolétarienne* closely associated with the events of May 1968, the accusation of conservatism sometimes directed at Lacan, be it sexual or otherwise, simply does not hold water. Lacanianism without any doubt may be characterized by an 'orthodoxy'; however, this orthodoxy is resolutely Freudian, and in radical disagreement with the neo-Freudian adaptive conformism of both the International Psychoanalytic Association and many of the American analytic societies.

Concerning the questions of feminism and sexuality, Lacanianism played an important role in both the advancement of French feminism through the agency of the MLF (*Mouvement de libération des femmes*) and, to a lesser extent, in the formation and eventual organization of the movement for homosexual rights in France. Lacan was a principal organizer of a conference on feminine sexuality in Amsterdam in 1960, a conference at least partially responsible for the

eventual explosion of psychoanalytic and feminist thought in France in the latter 1960s and the 1970s. Lacan's *Ecole freudienne de Paris* was frequented during its short lifespan by feminist leaders and writers such as Antoinette Fouque, Catherine Clément, and Luce Irigaray (despite her later 'departure'), and by a 'postcolonial' contingent of veterans of the Algerian struggle for independence.

At no point did Lacan's school formulate a definitive statement regarding the right of homosexuals to become analysts; nevertheless, the homosexuality of a number of its members was widely acknowledged, even though the question of the 'homosexual analyst' remained in suspension throughout the life of the *École*. At no point was a member of whatever function expelled on the basis of sexual practice. In the wider context of the history of psychoanalytic thought, its 'origins' in Freud's writings on both the Dora and Schreber cases and on da Vinci are deeply rooted in the 'experience' of homosexual desire; it is precisely 'queer subjects' to whom Freud was drawn in his project to explore the nature of human sexuality. In addition, female homosexuality was of tantamount importance in Lacan's own early work on paranoia and personality based on both the Aimée case and the Papin sisters incident.[3] In other words, a significant and crucial portion of the experiential dimension of psychoanalysis has fundamentally based itself on the testimony of non-heterosexual desire. More radically, I will argue in the following pages that the most revolutionary discovery of psychoanalysis lies in the qualification of the drive as essentially, universally 'perverse'.

As far as its political orientation is concerned, Lacanianism scores points in terms of its involvement in or association with 'progressive' activities. Lacan's cherished daughter Judith was in fact arrested at one point in Algeria for her involvement in the anti-colonialist movement. Certain members of the Lacanian circle, most importantly Maud Mannoni and Félix Guattari, became deeply involved in the anti-psychiatric movement inspired by the revival of the work of Wilhelm Reich. Despite accusations of hypocrisy hurled at him subsequent to the publication of *L'Anti-Oedipe*, Guattari remained a practicing psychoanalyst associated with the La Borde clinic, an institution closely linked to Lacanianism, throughout the 1970s; both Deleuze and Guattari, despite their criticisms of the insititutional politics of the *École*, continued to acknowledge their fundamental debt to Lacan long after the appearance of their 1972 work. It is also acknowledged that Lacan remained a close personal friend of Louis Althusser throughout his life, and actively sought an audience among members of the *Parti communiste français*. Finally, Jacques-Alain Miller, Lacan's son-in-law and heir apparent to the Lacanian throne, was deeply involved in the radical *Gauche prolétarienne* in the 1970s, and at one point was actively working toward the destruction of the French university system, a system in which, ironically enough, he eventually gained a prominent position.

Of course, in the final analysis, all of this matters very little. However impressive Lacan's leftist political affiliations and commitment to radical institutional change, however legendary his stoic refusal to compromise before the

conformist pressures of the IPA, no matter how directly he encouraged the theoretical activity of the Lacanian 'feminist' clique, the fact remains that he is dead, and that the political dimension of the assimilation and development of his theoretical legacy has only just begun to take shape. One may even go as far as to say that it is of no importance in what manner Lacanian theory was put into practice either during Lacan's lifetime, or in the historical past in general. What matters is how Lacanianism is being mobilized at the present moment and, most crucially, in which as yet unexplored manners this may be performed in the future. On these last issues, several comments must be made.

As it stands currently, the 'official' Millero-Lacanianism of the *Cause freudienne* has been most successful in implanting associations of practicing Lacanian analysts and study groups throughout the world. In addition to the massive influence of Lacanianism in the Latin countries, especially in Spain, Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina, and of course the dozen or so Lacanian groups which emerged as a result of the dissolution of the *EFP*, groups of various persuasions and concerns have formed in both Europe and North America. Among those that have influenced the present study is the American group, associated with the *Newsletter of the Freudian Field*, the Centre for the Study of Psychoanalysis and Culture at SUNY Buffalo, and the Lacanian analytic group based in New York City. Much of the assimilation of Lacanian thought in the anglophone world has taken place in Great Britain through the now-defunct journal *m/f*, the Tavistock clinic, and the program in psychoanalysis at Brunel University. Last but not least, there has been the recent influential emergence on the international scene of the Slovenian Lacanian group at the University of Llubljana, headed by the "giant of Llubljana" himself, Slavoj Zizek.

The publications of these various groups have to varying degrees addressed the political questions of concern to intellectuals on the left. Needless to say, the complex relationship of Lacanianism to feminism has been the inspiration for a wide range of work in the past two decades, and contintues to be a productive source of controversy. However, the potential usefulness of Lacanianism to antihomophobic (or 'queer', as this new branch of activity has been branded in the United States) cultural intervention has remained curiously unexplored. It is precisely at this juncture where the present study comes in.

The focus of the present work will be to undertake, first, an elucidation and elaboration of the relationship of Lacanianism to feminism and, second, to begin to theorize the uses of Lacan for antihomophobic cultural intervention. In other words, the central concern will be the marginalization of female and same-sex desiring subjects in heterosexist and androcentric cultural spaces and matrices of intelligibility. By using the terms 'queer' and 'feminist', my intention is to underscore the importance of contemporary critical interventions which highlight both the difficulties imposed by dominant discourses of sex and gender upon same-sex desiring subjects, as well as upon the genderally differential manner in which these discourses force themselves upon them. The following chapters will

attempt to uncover beneath Lacan's elusive, riddling, complex discourse a theoretical framework which is of tremendous, as yet largely unrealized, political value to queer-feminist political intervention.

Of course, this task is not a simple one; it is not one which may be undertaken alone, nor is it one which will be exhausted by the breadth and scope of a study such as this. Neither is it possible to generate an entirely 'innovative' discourse; one has always to acknowledge the formative and structuring effects of previous work: work from which one borrows one's vocabulary, one's strategies, one's style. For this reason, my text will be marked by the influence of previous scholarly work on Lacan, perhaps most importantly by that undertaken by such figures as Slavoj Zizek, Kaja Silverman, and Judith Butler. I also want to stress the fact that I present this study as an introductory one. To put all of this more simply, if there is an underlying desire in operation in these pages, it is the desire to re-orient Lacanianism not *away* from anything in particular, but *toward* the study of women and, in particular, toward queer subjects: subjects who have largely remained unexplored in any systematic fashion by Lacanians.

Before coming to the standard introduction to the chapters of this work, I want to make one final comment about my self-perceived relation to the Lacanian legacy. As I looked over the manuscript, it occurred to me that my readings of Lacan's *Écrits* and *Séminaires* often articulate themselves rhetorically along the lines of a presumed *intentionality vis-à-vis* Lacan himself. By this I mean that my radicalized *version* of Lacan often comes across as the *authentic* Lacan, as the Lacan that would have been minus the psychoanalytic-political context in which he was circumscribed. There is clearly a reason for this. In operation in these pages is my own unconscious phantasmatic idealization (in the Freudian sense) of Lacan *qua* intellectual figure. While I do have my own conscious (intellectual) reasons for believing that the Lacanian text is often underestimated as to its radicality, I nevertheless want to underline that this is my *belief*: a belief which in no way may be removed from its phantasmatic context. My intention here is not to undermine the *Lacanianness* of my text. The point I wish to make is instead that it is of course impossible, beyond any reasonable doubt, to establish how exactly Lacan intended his discourse to be assimilated. Hence, on one level, it is profoundly irrelevant to what extent my discourse fits into the constuct of "Lacanianism"; in short, I am doing my own thing, but this "thing" is being done within the context of a specific intellectual tradition, a tradition to which no one has the right to claim exclusive interpretive rights.

Structurally speaking, the main body is divided into two parts containing two chapters each. Each part may be characterized by a focus upon certain of the Lacanian registers, although it is of course impossible to do justice to Lacanian theory while ignoring the fundamental inseparability of the real, symbolic, and imaginary. The first half is at the most basic level concerned with the Lacan of the *Ecrits* and the early *Séminaires*, that is to say the Lacan of the fifties and early sixties, the Lacan of the ego and the imaginary, language and the symbolic. This

initial half is concerned with the 'origins' of Lacanian theory in the studies of Henri Wallon and the development of the theory of the mirror stage. The notions most fundamental in this section will be the development of the subject's relation to the ego, the acculturation of the subject by the introjection of the oedipal relation, and the negotiation by the subject of the residue left outside the boundaries of the egoic form. This first half will move toward a conclusion related to the Lacanian difference in psychoanalytic theory, more specifically to the manner in which Lacan deals with the residual normativity and biologism of Freud at his less useful moments.

The theoretical chapter which begins each of the two sections of the study is complemented by a 'textual' one, that is to say by a reading of a cultural text. In the first section, the Lacanian theory of the bodily ego is placed in dialogue with a contemporary novel which has emerged from the little known but extremely interesting gay literary avant-garde of the Bay Area of California. The text of concern is a 1985 novel by Robert Glück entitled *Jack the Modernist*, a text which may be situated in the context of a loosely associated group of California writers, known as the 'New Narrative', concerned with questions of narrative form, sexuality, and left politics, and critical of the more conventional and heterosexualized tendencies of urban gay culture. This chapter takes a look at the Glück novel in such a way as to figure out what Lacanian psychoanalysis might say about both the narrator's sexual obsession with his unfaithful lover and his interaction with the activist community of San Francisco. This section also looks at Glück's own published statements on Lacanian theory and attempts to elaborate ways in which these observations may usefully be developed.

The second half may be characterized by a dominant intertext: the work of the previously mentioned Slavoj Zizek. In terms of the Lacanian registers, it is the real which is dealt with in greatest detail in these pages. The theoretical part of this section proceeds dialectically; it attempts to put in dialogue Zizek's work with the by now well-known texts of Judith Butler, self-branded theorist of gender performativity. The dialectical structure of this chapter shows the limitations of Butler's work in psychoanalytic theory; it tries to show in what manner Butler's Derrideanism and residual Hegelianism 'get in the way', as it were, and cause her to draw some peculiar and unfounded conclusions about Lacan. This chapter moves toward a theoretical statement related to the appropriation of Zizek's later Lacan by queer theory; it ends with a general pronouncement on the relationship of the register of the real to the subject's narcissistic passion.

The final chapter, "Lynch with Lacan: Phallus *Walk with Me*," has the catchiest title. Its project is to read the most recent film of the controversial American filmmaker David Lynch in relation to some of Zizek's work on the cinematic representation of the real. Dealing with questions of psychoanalytic film theory, including primary and secondary identification in the cinema, it attempts to consider *Fire Walk with Me* in the light of a radically negative critique of patriarchal culture, in particular of the manner in which this culture

circumscribes identificatory options available to women. Of central concern in this section of the work, as in the previous one, is the Lacanian notion of the real. One of my aims here is to theorize in what manner this Lacanian register emerges in cultural representation and to analyze the effects of this disruptive emergence in terms of the subject position of phallic 'masculinity'.

The analysis of the Lynch film ends, as does the film itself, on a provocative, but radically ambiguous, note. This ambiguity serves as a springboard for the final speculations offered at the conclusion of this work. It is at this final point that the pressing question of the possible limits of psychoanalysis in terms of the theorization of gender and sexuality will be addressed. Where does one get to, where does one go, after gender and sexuality have been 'analyzed'? Is a more radical 'awareness' of the effects of gender identification all that psychoanalysis has to offer? Or is there a more 'political' dimension to psychoanalysis: one in which the questions of activism and social change may be broached?

Notes

1 I am indebted to the work of Catherine Clément and Elisabeth Roudinesco for much of the historical background on Lacanianism offered in this introduction. See Clément, *The Lives and Legends of Jacques Lacan*; and Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan & Co.*.

2 Ginette Raimbault, quoted in Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan & Co.*, p. 638.

3 See Jacques Lacan, *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité*; and Christopher Lane, "'The Delirium of Interpretation': Writing the Papin Affair."

1. The Lacanian Body

> C'est très drôle, ça comporte une incohérence vraiment étrange qu'on dise - l'homme [*sic*] *a* un corps.[1]
>
> - Jacques Lacan

Over the decades, the category of the body has functioned problematically in feminist theory. In a patriarchal culture in which male violence against women is pandemic, and in which the very 'femaleness' of the body has been used as justification for the oppression of women, feminists have rightly regarded the body with ambivalence. In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir devalorized the difference of the female body by positing as the ideal for women's subjectivities an existentialist, often masculinist, mode of "transcendence" (as opposed to "feminine" "immanence") which effectively evacuates sexual difference as such.[2] Consequently, she sought to displace the oppression imposed, and violence performed, by men upon women's bodies by means of the countervalorization of women's intellectual capacities, of the activities of mind and spirit.[3] More recently, however, writers such as Elizabeth Grosz and Luce Irigaray have attempted to reappropriate the body as that matter upon which an embodied feminist theory may be developed. These feminists seek to reverse the effects of an alleged phallocentrism by positing the essential difference of the female body, thereby redefining it in relation to its own corporeal specificity as opposed to penile 'lack'.

Of course, among the androcentric discourses which have been perceived by many feminists as contributing to the association of the female body with the notion of lack is that of psychoanalysis. On one level, therefore, it is profoundly paradoxical that the theories of the above-mentioned feminist authors have borrowed significantly from Freud, Lacan, and other psychoanalytic writers. Sharply critical of both Freud's and Lacan's insistence upon the cultural dominance of the phallic image, these recent feminist (psychoanalytic) theorists have attempted to manufacture a discourse centered upon tropes and figures derived from the specificity of the female body, thereby enabling women to assume a less restrictive relation to discourse, one which would impose fewer limitations upon the articulation by women (and, by extension, one could say, queer subjects) of their erotic experiences and subjectivities. As we shall see, however, the countervalorization of 'feminine' bodily forms imagined to occlude the dominance of the phallic and androcentric imaginary is extremely problematic in the light of the political concerns outlined previously.[4] My 'return to Lacan' in this chapter will therefore be deployed in an effort to escape the prison-house of the imaginary

and offer an alternative theory of the body more useful to queer theory and feminism.

I will argue in the following pages in favour of a reconsideration of psychoanalytic discourse, as represented most significantly in the theory of Jacques Lacan, in the interests of queer-feminist political intervention. It is in Lacan's notion of the subject's necessarily phantasmatic, libidinal, and imaginary relation to its bodily ego that one may find a powerful psychoanalytic-deconstructive weapon to be mounted against the attempts of dominant discourses to accord to both male and heterosexual bodies a 'naturalness' to which all other bodies are obliged to refer. The Lacanian theory of the body allows one to put into radical question the transparency of the subject's relation to its corporeality, in such a way that categories of the body which subsume under their heading, and therefore erase the differences between, a variety of individuals become immediately and undecidably problematic. My Lacanian conception of the body will lead to the conclusion that the positing of the body by oppositional cultural discourses as the strategic locus for political practice is not as unequivocal as it may originally seem. What becomes necessary in this circumstance is a theoretical distinction between the body *qua* narcissistic, phenomenological frame and an entirely different body *qua* Lacanian *corps morcele*.[5] This question will be taken up at the conclusion of the chapter.

By conceiving of the body, as Lacan does, as an unstable frontier, as a precarious boundary, between the corporeal and the social, between the anatomical and the cultural, between the biological and the learned, between the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt*, I will develop a theoretical framework in which to declare what must be characterized as the always already culturally inscribed 'nature' of the body in its relation to the psychic life of the subject. As a result of this premise, all notions of gender identity and fixed sexuality assume a phantasmatic character which allows the oppositional cultural critic to at once uncover the arbitrariness of the (imaginary) phallocentrism of the symbolic order,[6] and to negotiate new relationships between the female or queer subject and the structures of culture and language in whose image these subjects are formed.

1. This Non-Essentialism Which Is, in Fact, One

By way of introduction to this inquiry, I shall look at one feminist theorist's attempt to reappropriate the body as the most favourable locus for feminist political praxis. This example will serve to demonstrate how the unproblematic consideration of the body in terms of feminist or antihomophobic cultural intervention elicits the spectre of a dangerous bodily essentialism that may only come in the way of the struggle for 'progressive' social change.

Elizabeth Grosz argues in her work for the discursive mobilization of a universally female body, one which supposedly disengages the female subject from the essentialism of biological determinism. On Grosz's view, this body

simultaneously offers to women divided by differences of race, class, nationality and sexuality a common ground upon which to base their subjectivities. As should be evident in this brief synopsis of Grosz's project, the positing of a universally 'female' body is problematic for feminism. What compounds the problem in the case of Grosz's theory is her appropriation of the Lacanian notion of the imaginary anatomy, which will be discussed in greater detail below, and which posits the necessarily libidinal relationship of the subject to its corporeal image. Grosz paraphrases Lacan when she states that "[t]he body, when experienced-as-a-whole as well as the preceding phase of motor fragmentation that Lacan has described as 'the body-in-bits-and-pieces' [*le corps morcele*] - that is, the body and its various organs and orifices - are always psychically or libidinally mapped, psychically represented, as a condition of the subject's ability to use them and to include them in his or her self-image."[7]

Because she endorses the always already character of corporeal representation in the psyche, Grosz's subsequent contention that the 'female' body may be recuperated as the universal locus of women's experience contradicts her appropriation of Lacan. As I will show below, the *psychical* notion of the body "experienced as a whole" derives from the incorporation of a form in a position necessarily characterized by its alterity in relation to the subject's *anatomical* body, and therefore varies from individual to individual in a manner that has little or nothing to do with what is conventionally perceived as a self-apparent gendered or sexed 'identity'. Viewed in this light, Grosz's manifesto for a corporeal feminism makes little sense. Despite her insistence upon the necessarily cultural relation of the body to the perceptions of the subject, Grosz's notion of the universality of the female body paradoxically contradicts the anti-essentialist argument of her discourse.

> If feminists are to avoid a reverse essentialism, in which a determinate form of femininity is universalised, providing a female 'version of humanity', then concepts, which explain both the commonness women share cross-culturally, and their cultural and individual specificities, are necessary for women's positive self-definition. A 'genuine' female universal, if not located in a fixed identity or psyche (as implied by humanism), can be corporeally located. Women's carnal existence, their corporeal commonness, may provide a universal 'raw material', which is nevertheless pliable enough to account for cultural, historical, class and racial specificities distinguishing concrete women from each other (2).

If Grosz wants to avoid biologistic essentialism, why is it necessary that she ground the female subject in a 'universal' notion of bodily experience, while at the same time futilely attempting to maintain cultural, racial, and historical specificity? Is it not profoundly paradoxical to account for an essentially 'female' body while, first, adopting the Lacanian notion of the imaginary anatomy and,

second, insisting that the uniqueness of this body does not constitute a humanistic 'identity'? In other words, if one postulates, after Lacan, that there is no discrete 'body' or 'mind', that the projected periphery of the imaginary ego constitutes the actual barrier between inner and outer, is it not seriously illogical to go on referring to the 'female body', let alone posit it as a 'universal' aspect of women's experience? If we accept the Lacanian premise that the body may not be imagined outside of its libidinized psychical representation, outside of its ideational representative, or again that there is no unmediated access to the body, how is it possible to regard the body as a "genuine female universal"?

Even if this "universal" female body is a political necessity, which it very well may be, it by no means necessarily follows that feminism must subtend this body's ontology. Clearly, there is a dangerous slippage at work in Grosz's discourse between, on the one hand, a materialist conception of women's bodies in their physical, anatomical specificity and, on the other, a Lacanian theory of the body *qua* narcissistic egoic form. It therefore becomes necessary to offer an alternative queer-feminist theory of the body which remains psychoanalytic, yet at the same time theorizes a space in which the resistance of the human subject to the gendered forms of culture may be mounted. In an effort to further elucidate the problematic status of both Grosz's appropriation of Lacan and her notion of a universal female body, and to begin to work toward the goal just stated, I shall now turn to Lacan's elucidation of the function of *méconnaissance* presupposed by the psychic, incorporative process of the body image which takes place during the mirror-stage formation of the subject's ego.

2. *The Mirror and the (Bodily) Ego*

In a seldom-regarded article which appeared in the *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* in 1953, Lacan summarized his views relating to the imaginary function in the subject of the egoic formation. This article, as is the case with many of Lacan's *écrits*, and of course all of the *séminaires*, is a transcription of an oral discourse, one which, in this particular instance, was delivered to the British Psycho-Analytical Society two years before its eventual publication. The notion of the mirror stage, or mirror phase, was one of the first concepts presented by Lacan to his public, and was initially expounded at a conference in Marienbad in 1936 (though it did not appear in the conference publication). It was later revised for the 16th International Congress of Psychoanalysis in Zürich in 1949.[8] The imaginary function of the structure of the ego is therefore one which lays the conceptual foundation for a significant portion of Lacan's subsequent theorizing.

Despite later developments and elucidations, the French analyst never tired of alluding to this concept's tantamount, structuring importance in the psychic life of the subject. In the context of the present study, the function of the mirror stage is fundamental to the Lacanian conception of the body, for it is during this process that the human subject attributes to its fragmented and inchoate bodily

experience the illusion of wholeness and mastery. This attribution will continue to have profound repercussions upon the subject's psyche for the remainder of its life, in particular as relates to its subsequent secondary identifications. It will be repeatedly jeopardized by the return of the residual real excluded by the egoic form, and it it this threat of the return of the real, coupled with the solid formalism of the narcissistic relation, which constitutes one slope of the triadic dialectic of the Lacanian subject.[9]

In Lacan, the imaginary register is that upon which the phenomena of identification, eroticism, phantasy, and projection occur. It therefore makes sense that it is also on the imaginary register that the formation of the ego takes place. As Freud knew, the ego is primarily a "bodily ego," characterized by its association with the "*surface* of the mental apparatus."[10] The intimate relation between the subject's representation of the body to itself and its conception of the 'truth' of its being was therefore a fundamental thesis of Freudian psychoanalysis. Concerning Freud's intuition, Lacan reminds us that "quand Freud parle de l'égo, il ne s'agit pas du tout de je ne sais quoi d'incisif, de déterminant, d'impératif, par où il se confondrait avec ce qu'on appelle dans la psychologie académique les *instances supérieures*. Freud souligne que ça doit avoir le plus grand rapport avec la surface du corps. Il ne s'agit pas de la surface sensible, sensorielle, impressionnée, mais de cette surface en tant qu'elle est réfléchie dans une forme."[11] Given Lacan's stress upon its formalism, reflectedness, and superficiality, the ego emerges, according to the following description, as that which constitutes the *enabling principle*, the *objective form*, the *scientific substance* of psychoanalytic methodology.

> The theory we have in mind is a genetic theory of the ego. Such a theory can be considered psycho-analytic in so far as it treats the relation of the subject to his [*sic*][12] own body in terms of his [*sic*] identification with an *imago*, which is the psychic relationship *par excellence*; in fact, the concept we have formed of this relationship from our analytic work is the starting point for all genuine and scientific psychology.
>
> It is with the body-image that we propose to deal now. If the hysterical symptom is a symbolic way of expressing a conflict between different forces, what strikes us is the extraordinary effect that this 'symbolic expression' has when it produces segmental anaesthesia or muscular paralysis unaccountable for by any known grouping of sensory nerves or muscles. To call these symptoms functional is but to confess our ignorance, for they follow the pattern of a certain imaginary Anatomy which has typical forms of its own. In other words, the astonishing somatic compliance which is the outward sign of this imaginary anatomy is only shown within certain definite limits. I would emphasize that the imaginary anatomy referred to here varies with the ideas (clear or confused) about bodily functions which are prevalent in a given culture. It all

> happens as if the body-image had an autonomous existence of its own, and by autonomous I mean here independent of objective structure.[13]

In order for the subject to bind the fragmented sensations of the *corps morcelé* (body-in-fragments) into a coherent *Gestalt* (whole), the incorporation of the image of the other as the ego of the subject is required. In other words, the ego is always and necessarily alienated; it is always a defensive mechanism designed to shield the subject from the chaotic, (Lacanian) real sensations of the fragmented body. The condition of possibility for cultural subjectivity is therefore a primordial bodily repression, which returns in the psychic life of the subject in the dream-images of bodily mosaics, jig-saw puzzles, and incongruities articulated by analysands to both Freud and Lacan (13). The psychic representation of the subject's body is hence never its own; it is instead the incorporation of the body of the other, phantasmatically and illusorily misrecognized as whole, mastered, and self-sufficient. On this view, the symptoms of the hysteric are to be considered a return of the repressed, chaotic, real body, or bodily real, all of which emerge in consciousness in the form of (secondarily) revised bodily symptoms, whose meaning is disguised by the distortions of Freudian condensation and displacement, or Lacanian metaphor and metonymy. The dialectic character of the Lacanian body emerges as the sustained energetic conflict between the illusion of coherence provided by imaginary identification and the real residue of the hysteric symptom.

The concept of the imaginary anatomy, implicit in all of Lacan's work of the 1950s but never again referred to as such, is a crucial one for queer-feminism. Because the phantasy of wholeness, incorporated by the subject as the *sine qua non* for the formation of its ego, relies upon the field of culture, that is to say, using Lacan's words, upon "the ideas (clear or confused) about bodily functions which are prevalent in a given culture," there may never be anything 'natural', unmediated, prediscursive, anatomical or biological about the subject's corporeal experience.

Quite simply, the subject has no direct access to its chaotic, unrepresentable, real body, because its representation must necessarily be circumscribed by both the distortions of consciousness and the mediation of the illusion of wholeness projected from the position of the other. The imaginary representation of the body on the part of the subject is necessarily predicated upon misrecognition (*méconnaissance*). What is more, the subject may never grasp its body in its 'entirety'; the disruptive return of bodily residue is a constant, uncanny, spectral threat from which the subject is never 'safe'. Consequently, the subject (and this is what Lacan means in this chapter's epigraph) *has* neither its body nor its ego, because the representation (Freud's "*Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*") of bodily drives derives from the field of the Other; the egoic form remains in a radically assymetrical relation to the residual bodily surplus.

The drama of the mirror stage derives its structuring power in the life of the human subject from the fact of what Lacan terms the infant's "foetalization" at the moment of birth. He submits as evidence for this contention the findings of comparative anatomists. The unmyelated state of the pyramidal tracts (of, presumably, the spinal cord), as well as the lack of motor and sensory co-ordination demonstrated on the part of the young subject by "a number of postural reactions and reflexes" (15), point to the conclusion that the *infans* is congenitally premature at the dawn of life. A consequence of this observation is that the newborn human subject is dependent upon images of members of its own species in order to become a functioning participant in culture. Using as examples the pigeon and the grasshopper, the French analyst relays the observations of scientists that among many species in the animal kingdom, sexual maturation is dependent upon the sighting on the part of the individual of "something whose shape and movements are sufficiently like one of its own species" (14).

In other words, there is a relationship of dependence between anatomical development and the perception on the part of the subject of the visual field. (Lacan is careful to explain, it is important to note, that the subject's perception of the visual field does not in turn depend upon its sense of sight). As I will show, however, Lacan distinguishes the animal's utter dependence upon species-recognition with what, in the human sphere, is a more complex, mediated relationship, one which allows for a greater amount of agency on the part of the speaking subject.

Lacan's description of the sensations of the human child in front of its mirror- image stresses the structuring function of the ego in all subsequent eroticism experienced by the subject in later stages of life.[14] Lacan describes the moment of the mirror-stage thus:

> The observation [of the phenomenon of the mirror stage] consists simply in the *jubilant interest* shown by the infant over eight months at the sight of his [*sic*] own image in a mirror. This interest is shown in games in which the child seems to be in *endless ecstasy* when it sees that movements in the mirror correspond to its own movements. The game is rounded off by attempts to explore the things seen in the mirror and the nearby objects they reflect. (14, emphasis added)

In terms of the politics of sexuality, it is possible to read the Lacanian explication of the imaginary figuration of the erotic in a manner which radically subverts any attempt to accord to the sexual function any sense of 'naturalness', of prediscursivity, of functionality. Because the experience of the erotic is in part derived from the projection of a corporeal form that is not the subject's own, a form which is also shaped by the cultural codes which accord to the body its imaginary meaning, sexuality of all kinds is predicated upon a fundamental *méconnaissance*, a mistake, an illusion, a misrecognition. Bodily sensation may

never be direct, may never be unmediated by an alien, interiorized egoic form which must necessarily structure all forms of cultural subjectivity, and which is always already marked by the tattoo-effect of culture upon the body's surface.

It may not be said, therefore, that the subject *is* its body, *has* or *possesses* its body, because this body is fundamentally split; it is at all moments shaped by a dialectic between the return of the repressed, ex-centric bodily real, and the alien egoic form which allows for bodily sensation to occur in the first place. The subject, in other words, is not *in* the body, for the body that it believes it is *in* is in reality not in the position of the subject, that is to say, where the subject *thinks* it is. It is in fact only by means of the so-called perversions, that is to say sado-masochism, scopophilia, exhibitionism, and other partial drives that the frustration and aggressiveness experienced by the subject in the prison-house of the *alter ego* may at moments be brought to bear, and thus temporarily occluded in a moment of pure desire. In his first seminar, Lacan expounds upon this necessarily culturally-mediated relationship between the consciousness of the subject and the form it misrecognizes as its own body.

> Le sujet repère et reconnaît originellement le désir par l'intermédiaire, non seulement de sa propre image, mais du corps de son semblable. C'est à ce moment-là exactement que s'isole chez l'être humain la conscience en tant que conscience de soi. C'est pour autant que c'est dans le corps de l'autre qu'il reconnaît son désir que l'échange se fait. C'est pour autant que son désir est passé de l'autre côté qu'il s'assimile le corps de l'autre et qu'il se reconnaît comme corps.[15]

What may be termed Lacan's radical antihumanism becomes apparent here. On the one side of the imaginary-real dialectic, the subject as identified with the *Gestalt* of the other experiences itself as separate from the world, as fundamentally alienated, for it perceives itself at the point where it *is* not. On the other side, the side of desire, where the subject's egoic fixation is broken by the intrusion of the real, or by the bodily excess excluded by the imaginary function, the subject is confronted with the abyss in its very being, with the inescapable *incompleteness* of the human condition: the effects of a desire for wholeness - a wholeness that may never be attained. This particular dialectic is the one Lacan terms "oscillation imaginaire."[16] It is precisely this tension which suggests a powerful critique of the category of the body as it has been deployed in humanist theoretical discourses. After Lacan's rejection of the ontology of the body, any mention of it must be placed indefinitely between quotation marks which signify both the subject's mediated relationship to bodily sensation, and the primacy of the field of culture upon the social construction of the body's functionality.

3. From the Mirror to the Oedipus

It is clear that Lacan's rereading of Freud's elucidation of primary identification successfully transcends what I wish to designate as the latter's residual biologism. However, having dealt with the imaginary register in its dialectical conflict with the residual real, the link between the subject's narcissistic bodily relation and its entry into the symbolic order has yet to be discussed. For this purpose, Lacan's text "L'agressivité en psychanalyse" will be of tremendous use. "L'agressivité" works at the most basic level as an introduction to the function of the imaginary register in the formation of the subject's ego. Toward the end of the paper, however, Lacan introduces the notion of the Oedipus as the introjected structure through which the subject accedes to the symbolic order, which is, for Lacan, the register of speech and language. It is at this point that one may begin to ask some important questions related to my political project.

Given that the Freudian Oedipus tends to normalize gender identity acquisition in its persistent failure to completely divorce the processes of parental identification from the effect of phallic privilege, is it not a dangerous thing to find in Lacan the notion of the necessary adoption by the subject of the oedipal relation? If the discourse of the Oedipus is structured upon the father-mother-son triad, upon Deleuze and Guattari's "daddy-mommy-me," in other words upon the structure of the heteropatriarchal family from the point of view of the male child, is it not impossible to avoid in this paradigm the adoption by the subject of a position in culture which unavoidably reflects an androcentric and heterosexist bias? If Lacan insists upon the fact, as he so clearly does, that the introjection of the oedipal relation on the part of the subject is the condition of possibility for a non-psychotic, non-neurotic, and fully functioning subjectivity, is it not unavoidable that the only two options available to the subject are either a conformity to the androcentric and heterosexist status quo, or a relegation of the psyche to a dysfunctional psychotic state characterized by a pathological, non-individuated relation to the structure of language? It is my intention here to take a closer look at "L'agressivité" in an attempt to begin to answer these urgent questions.

Lacan makes a clear distinction in his discussion of the function of the Oedipus between primary and secondary identification. The former process is that by which the subject assumes the illusion of mastery over its fragmented and inchoate bodily experience. It is this imaginary process that Lacan outlines in "Le stade du miroir"[17] and, as I have shown, it is clear that Lacan understands this function as one of *méconnaissance*. The process of secondary identification, in which the subject assumes its symbolic relation to the parental figure, is characterized by Lacan as "[l']introjection de l'imago du parent de même sexe."[18] It is this identification which, given the normative (i.e. heterosexual) direction accorded to desire, appears to be problematic. However, Lacan states that the secondary identification with the parental figure of the same sex is rendered

possible only by the previous identification, the process "qui structure le sujet comme rivalisant avec soi-même" (117). In relation to this structuring primary identification, Lacan explains:

> En fait, la note d'impuissance biologique se retrouve ici, ainsi que l'effet d'anticipation caractéristique de la genèse du psychisme humain, dans la fixation d'un « idéal » imaginaire que l'analyse a montré décider de la conformation de l'« instinct » au sexe physiologique de l'individu. Point, soit dit en passant, dont nous ne saurions trop souligner la portée anthropologique. Mais ce qui nous intéresse ici, c'est *la fonction que nous appellerons pacifiante de l'*idéal du moi, *la connexion de sa normativité libinidale avec une normativité culturelle, liée depuis l'orée de l'histoire à l'*imago *du père*. Ici gît évidemment la portée que garde l'oeuvre de Freud : *Totem et tabou*, malgré le cercle mythique qui la vicie, en tant qu'elle fait dériver de l'événement mythologique, à savoir du meurtre du père, la dimension subjective qui lui donne son sens, la culpabilité. (117, emphasis added)

This is, I think, a crucial passage, one which points to the potential of psychoanalytic discourse to unveil the fundamental *méconnaissance* at play in the tendency of the subject to conform its libidinal mapping-out of the body, as well as its adoption of an image of normative gender behaviour, to an interiorized parental image. What Lacan is suggesting here is the fact that the 'instincts', the libido, the drives, may not be anything but impositions of culture upon an inherently unsignifiable bodily *real*. The "conformity of the 'instinct' to the physiological sex" of the parental *imago* is predicated upon the same imaginary function which accords to the subject the illusion of bodily integrity. Radically, Lacan is asserting that not only are the gender identity of the subject and the erotogenicity of its body the effects of the ideas and myths, plausible or implausible, of the culture in question regarding both the functions of bodily organs and the behaviours of the gendered subject, but that these functions are also predicated upon a primordial illusion, a structuring *méconnaissance*.

In other words, there may never be anything 'natural' about gender and sexuality, given the fact that the human subject must derive its self-concept from the field of culture, from the field of the Other. Rather than having a stake in the normative standards of dominant culture, psychoanalysis, at least in its more radical Lacanian versions, instead provides the tools to begin to identify, to bring to consciousness, those phantasies through which gender and sexuality are naturalized, are accorded the mistaken notion that they are somehow innate, anatomical, and 'directly' emergent from the body. If Lacan insists that cultural normativity has been bound up "depuis l'orée de l'histoire à l'*imago* du père," it is also clear that this identification is illusory, and that the point of Lacanian analysis is to bring this point to bear. It is the work of analysis not to subvert the

structuring centrality of the paternal metaphor, but rather to lay bare the illusory link by which its introjection is associated with the *imago* of the father.[19] Analytic work also consists in the breaking down of the universalizing fixity of this phantasmatic link through the intervention of the death drive, through the paradoxical adoption on the part of the subject of the liberatory freedom exercised by its assumption of the ego's periodic and pulsating death. As Freud knew, the father is always murdered in the phantasies of the subject, and it is this desire for the severance of the symbol from the imaginary father that allows the subject to effectuate the destruction of that which grounds its dependence upon the myths of culture, be they oedipal or otherwise.

What interests Lacan most about the structure of the Oedipus is its inevitable collapse, its unavoidable inadequacy. The symptoms which presumably compel the subject to seek analysis are precisely the manifestations of those psychic energies excluded by the illusory totality of the oedipal egoic form. The goal of analysis is not to *cure* the symptom, since this would amount to the sanctioning by the analyst of the alienating parental identifications of the subject, but rather to allow, as much as this is possible, the symptom to speak; in other words, what is sought is precisely the subject's *symbolization of the symptom*. This is what leads Lacan to refer to the Freudian perversions in his discourse, because it is precisely by means of those instincts which surpass the narrow bounds of the genital 'function' that the universalizing structure of the Oedipus may be broken up in the subject's discourse.[20]

While it is clear that Lacan does not allow for the unambiguous, unqualified independence of the speaking subject from its imaginary fixations, it is nevertheless obvious that the whole point of a Lacanian analysis is to minimize their effect through the agency of the "aggressivity" alluded to in the title of the discourse. It is precisely the element of frustration inevitably experienced on the part of the subject in relation to its egoic formations that leads it to desire the death of the ego, and to seek an impossible restitution of cultural independence by means of the tendencies of "perversion." There is no subject, Lacan seems to suggest, who is above the universal human desire to eliminate imaginary dependence through the channeling of the libido to non-normative (i.e. non-'genital') vehicles of expression, that is to say, to the partial drives (which, it is interesting to note, are the only *possible* drives). It is by this that the analysand's "aggressivity" is constituted.

> Nous avons souvent dit que l'accent mis d'abord dans la doctrine sur les rétorsions agressives du conflit oedipien dans le sujet répondait au fait que les effets du complexe furent aperçus d'abord dans les *ratés* de sa solution.
>
> Il n'est pas besoin de souligner qu'une théorie cohérente de la phase narcissique clarifie le fait de l'ambivalence propre aux « pulsions partielles » de la scoptophilie, du sadomasochisme et de l'homosexualité, non moins

> que le formalisme stéréotypique et cérémoniel de l'agressivité qui s'y manifeste : nous visons ici l'aspect fréquemment très peu « réalisé » de l'appréhension de l'autrui dans l'exercice de telles de ces perversions, leur valeur subjective dans le fait bien différente des reconstructions existentielles, d'ailleurs très saisissantes, qu'un Jean-Paul Sartre en a pu donner.[21]

The failures of the oedipal conflict are in this manner not only accorded a privileged place in the discourse of the Lacanian patient, but they are deemed an inevitable result of the human subject's dependence upon the field of the Other for the constitution of cultural subjectivity. "Tous les refus du développement typique dans le sujet, et spécialement sur le plan de la réalisation sexuelle" (119), while unable to promise satisfaction to the suffering subject, nevertheless allow it to derive as much independence as possible from the cultural normativity which at all points attempts to invade and control its discourse and phantasy life. Although Lacan concedes that there is no possible form of human subjectivity which would allow for the complete subversion of those cultural messages in whose image we are formed, the real of desire, the desire for death, the partial drives excluded from all manifestations of cultural normativity, all these things always return in the psychic life of the human subject; it is to the bringing to discourse of the desire for death that the Lacanian analyst dedicates her/his work. In the Lacanian context, the perversions are thus those partial drives which manifest an aggressive resistance to the forces of totalization endemic to the function of oedipalization, of mirror-stage identificatory formations.[22]

In another classic Lacanian text, "Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse," otherwise known as the *Discours de Rome*, there are further indications that the spirit of Lacanian theory may in fact be assimilable to an oppositional cultural politics. In his discussion of the neo-Freudian reading of the psychosexual stages, in which the normativity of heterosexual "genital love" was postulated as the teleological and climactic aim of the development of the subject's sexuality, Lacan insists that the compulsion on the part of neo-Freudian analysts to consider the stages diachronically, as temporally discrete fixations culminating in an ideal, unconflicted sexuality, is leading analysis off the track. As Lacan indicates:

> Les meilleures plumes [analytiques] distillent leur encre à poser des équations qui satisfassent aux exigences du mystérieux *genital love* [...]. Personne pourtant ne paraît ébranlé par le malaise qui en résulte, et l'on y voit plutôt matière à encourager tous les Münchhausen de la normalisation psychanalytique à se tirer par les cheveux dans l'espoir d'atteindre au ciel de la pleine réalisation de l'objet génital, voire de l'objet tout court.[23]

Lacan is suggesting in this passage the imaginary, and therefore the fundamentally alienating, nature of (genital or other forms of) 'love'. It is not that the partial drives, unlike the circumscription of genital normativity, accord to the human subject the satisfaction of desire. Instead, Lacan wants to insist that all human desire, because fundamentally alienated, is unsatisfiable. It follows that there is no inherent sense in the moralistic hierarchization of the forms of human sexuality.

What Lacan seems to be objecting to most insistently in his argument against the 'conservative' interpretation of the Freudian psychosexual stages is the hypocritical morality accorded by certain neo-Freudian analysts to the valuation of certain forms of sexual activity (i.e. heterosexual genitality) over others. Because of the prematurity of the *infans* at the moment of birth, the human subject's erotogenicity is forever circumscribed by the nostalgia for *jouissance*, by the jubilant illusion of mastery constitutive of primary identification, tragically necessary for the erotic enjoyment of bodily surfaces and orifices. The Lacanian analyst, it is suggested, is wasting her/his time when s/he worries in what manner the patient is sexually active, for the goal is rather to attempt, as much as this is possible, to identify the persons or objects which function in the phantasy life of the subject as the model for the erotogenization of the bodily surface, and in this manner to minimize the potential alienating fixity characteristic of human eroticism. Rather than concern itself with a moralizing discourse related to the means of sexual pleasure, a Lacanian analysis works toward the awareness on the part of the subject of the projected bodily entities which found its erotic life in the first place, thereby reducing the effects of the sanctions through which culture circumscribes the body's potential for pleasure.

4. Luce Irigaray's Bodily Encounter with the Mother

Lacan's psychoanalytic 'deconstruction' of the body has not been viewed without apprehension, if not hostility, however, by certain feminist theorists. Luce Irigaray, for instance, who was at one point a member of Lacan's *École freudienne de Paris*, stresses in her essay "Le corps-à-corps avec la mère" the need for a feminist psychoanalysis to re-posit the category of the body. In this paper, first presented to a colloquium of mental health professionals in Montréal in 1980, Irigaray claims that the body must be recuperated precisely because it is not just any body, but the specifically *maternal* body, which is 'murdered' in Lacan's theory. Inspiring Grosz's theoretical derivations, then, Irigaray wants to theorize the uniqueness of the female body, to reclaim it from the effect of patriarchal repression, and to create a new discourse on the basis of woman's coporeal specificity.

In this section of the chapter, I will review and question Irigaray's critique of Lacan's notion of the *nom-du-père* in an effort to problematize the return to/of the body of the mother. While Irigaray's discourse does present queer-feminism with valuable insights regarding Lacan's periodic imaginary phallocentrism, it

nevertheless posits the subject's unalienated, dyadic bodily relation to the mother in a way that must be regarded as anti-analytic. In addition, Irigaray subsumes under the maternal relation the agency of language and desire in the theory of the human subject, thereby inadequately explaining the primacy of the function of symbolization in culture.

Irigaray's main thesis in her paper is that the argument of psychoanalysis related to the primordial murder of the father at the origin of human culture masks a more basic and structuring murder, that of the body of the mother. For Irigaray, it is precisely the subject's repression of maternal dependency that has instituted the dominance of the phallus in the symbolic order. The desire of and for the mother is what is occluded, in other words, by the institution of the Name-of-the-father. Irigaray uses the *Oresteia* to counter the primacy of the oedipal myth in psychoanalysis. The Oedipus is but one of many myths in Greek culture, she suggests, and the emphasis placed upon the patricide which marks the dramatic culmination of this myth masks the importance of the matricide dramatized in Aeschylus's tragedy. For Irigaray, "Oreste tue sa mère parce que l'empire du Dieu-Père et son appropriation des archaïques puissances de la terre-mère l'exigent. [...] Le fils matricide doit être sauvé de la folie pour instaurer l'ordre patriarcal.[24] Irigaray argues that what Lacan considers to be the necessary entry of the human subject into the symbolic order is predicated upon a turning away from, a bodily repression of, the symbiotic relationship with the mother. Put succinctly by Irigaray, "le père interdit le corps-à-corps avec la mère" (26).

The difficulty of Irigaray's criticism of Lacan emerges less from her rejection of the secondary identification with the father, in particular in relation to the female subject, than in the difficulty of explaining through her theory the primacy of the symbol by means of the notion of maternal bodily repression. For Lacan, what Irigaray idylically views as the state of symbiosis with the mother is a narcissistic trap which must necessarily culminate in violence, destruction and death, either of the subject or of the other. Lacan in fact uses the notion of primary narcissism to account for the constancy of violence and war in human history. Because any two-termed relationship for Lacan is always experienced on the part of the subject by frustration, the only hope for this subject is to accept the fact that its meaning comes to it from the 'third term', that is to say from the Other. The subject must reconcile itself to the truth of its circumscription by the signifier and the gaze in the field of the Other.[25] Later on in his discourse, in fact, when Lacan returned to the theorization of the mirror stage, he insisted that the illusion of plenitude inaugurated by the mirror relation is indelibly marked by its uncanniness. For the subject before the mirror, the image 'looks back'. What was in the early stages of Lacanianism a reassuring, albeit illusory phantasm becomes in the later Lacan an uncanny and anxious experience between the subject and its *Doppelgänger*.[26]

Irigaray's insistence upon re-evaluating what is fundamentally a narcissistic relationship must inevitably return to the notion of the affect of aggressivity

emerging from the subject's fundamentally alienated ego, its primordially split subjectivity. For Lacan, language and symbolization would not need emerge if the illusion of integrity with the mother were maintained. It is precisely because of the split in the subject, the endless desire for completion by means of the *objet petit a*, that language gains its structural prominence. The notion of completeness was always an illusion masking a more violent, destructive reality. It is only by means of the entry into the process of signification that the human subject may be relieved of the endless specularity of the self-relexive narcissistic relation. Irigaray therefore does not adequately counter in "Le corps-à-corps" Lacan's most basic thesis: that subjective wholeness, whether by means of the bodily encounter with the mother or with any other subject, is untenable.

Perhaps a more valuable criticism of Lacan's theory of the subject would emerge from the problematization of the specificity of the *mother's* body as that which structures primary narcissism. In other words, it would be less anti-analytic (and simply less illogical) to inquire as to why it must be the mother who provides the subect with the desire for completion with which it will unavoidably be haunted for the rest of its life. Is the function of primary narcissism, in other words, attributable to the specifically *maternal* body, to woman's biological capacity to give life, or instead to the dependence of the Lacanian *infans* upon the *primary care-giver*? At no point that I know of in his discourse does Lacan insist that the function of the mother necessarily relates to the *subject who gives birth*.[27] Because of the notoriously abstract nature of Lacan's life of teaching, it is entirely possible to separate the specular and dyadic relationship with the mother from both the *maternal specificity* of women and, more importantly, from *women's specificity, period*.

It is my contention, in other words, that instead of adopting the Irigarayan position, thereby reneging the most fundamental tenets of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, or in other words, throwing the baby, so to speak, out with the bathwater, it is rather much more politically useful for queer-feminism to insist upon the fact that the *Lacanian mother need not be viewed as gendered*. Once this notion has been acknowledged, the *méconnaissance* of Lacan's misogyny is eradicated, and the access to political efficacy becomes more evident than previously. The emphasis upon the Lacanian mother's (potential) tendency toward transvestism shifts the focus of his discourse from its arguable gender specificity to a much more valuable and fruitful concern with the discursive processes through which the *maternal body tends to be viewed as the necessary locus of phantasmatic wholeness in the first place*.

Perhaps the most problematic aspect of Irigaray's theorization of the maternal in "Le corps-à-corps" is her insistence upon the manner in which the bodily encounter with the mother allows for the creation of a new language ("langage," as contrasted with [paternal] "langue")[28] more conducive than the phallocentric one to women's articulation of their eroticism(s). It is entirely unclear in what manner this language will emerge, given that Freud's entire *oeuvre*

showed that the function of language is precisely to fill a void which may never be filled. In other words, on the Freudian-Lacanian view, or even, dare I say it, on the *psychoanalytic* one, there is no need for language if there is no void, no absence, no lack. It is less important to what this absence refers than that the absence is, *tout court*, there, that it exists, and that it accounts for the emergence of language. This absence, this missing signifier in the field of language, remains ambiguous, at any rate, for it relies upon a *phantasized presence* in order to emerge as meaning. The illusion of wholeness with the mother's body is precisely that: an illusion, a phantasy. Nevertheless, Irigaray writes:

> L'ordre social, notre culture, la psychanalyse elle-même, le veulent ainsi : la mère doit rester interdite, exclue. Le père interdit le corps-à-corps avec la mère. (26)

> Mais où se tient, pour nous, l'imaginaire et la symbolique de la vie intra-utérine et du premier corps-à-corps avec la mère? Dans quelle nuit, quelle folie, sont-ils laissés? (27)

It is entirely unclear how the concept of an "intra-uterine symbolic" is possible, if the symbolic is characterized by its *linguistic* structure, that is to say by its constitution by a differential set of elements contrasted one with the other, functioning to metonymically cast a veil upon the primordial hole in the real, the lack in the Other. Because intra-uterine life is pre-symbolic, pre-oedipal, pre-mirror stage, it is not possible for language to emerge there. *There is no loss, no lack*, which language must attempt to cover up. Lacan in fact explicitly states that the subject characterized by its inability to take up a position in language is psychotic. On the Lacanian view, therefore, what Irigaray is advocating for women is a dysfunctional, politically ineffectual, literally psychotic state of *being*, whereas the category of the ontological is radically problematized in Lacan. If new things are to emerge in the symbolic order, as Lacan himself said they may in fact do,[29] they must emerge in the symbolic sphere, in the sphere of language.

For Irigaray, the interiorization of the *nom-du-père* which is the precondition of the entry of the subject into the symbolic order guarantees that this symbolic order must always and necessarily be a patriarchal one. The agency of the *nom-du-père* prohibits access to the body of the mother in its maternal specificity, as well as to the figuration of the mother as object of desire. The Lacanian theory of acculturation and subjectivation, in other words, refuses to figure at all the female, the feminine, on the map of culture. Irigaray's project therefore valiantly struggles to create a discursive space in which 'saying yes' to the *nom-du-père* need not take place. Pre-supposed by the latter strategy are at least two notions: first, that the *nom-du-père* is genderally specific, that it always already refers to the male figurehead of the heteropatriarchal familial unit; and

second, that the 'present' symbolic order is not only entirely and unapologetically androcentric but, more crucially, that it must forever remain that way:

> Nous avons à veiller une autre chose : ne pas retuer la mère qui a été immolée à l'origine de notre culture. Il s'agit de lui redonner la vie, à cette mère, à notre mère en nous et entre nous. Il faut que nous refusions que son désir soit anéanti par la loi du père. Nous devons lui donner droit au plaisir, à la jouissance, à la passion, lui redonner droit à la parole, parfois aux cris et à la colère.
>
> Nous avons aussi à trouver, retrouver, inventer les mots, les phrases, qui disent le rapport le plus archaïque et le plus actuel au corps de la mère, à notre corps, les phrases qui traduisent le lien entre son corps, le nôtre, celui de nos filles. Nous avons à découvrir un langage qui ne substitue pas au corps-à-corps, ainsi que tente de le faire la langue paternelle mais qui l'accompagne, des paroles qui ne barrent pas le corporel mais qui parlent corporel. (30-31)

Again, Irigaray's contentions force us to do away with the Lacanian theoretical edifice in its entirety. And I would suggest that this is certainly not a good thing for queer theory or feminism. Irigaray's desire to find a language which does not seek to substitute for the body of the 'mother' is self-defeating, for it is precisely the purpose of language to endlessly seek this phantasmatic, narcissistic body's substitution.[30] Put another way, the truth following from the incompleteness of the Lacanian Other is precisely its aetiological relation to the emergence of language. In addition, by insisting upon 'saying no' to the *nom-du-père*, of doing *it* despite that father's *non*, Irigaray is again insisting upon what is, on the Lacanian view, an entirely impossible form of cultural subjectivity, impossible not because psychotic and nonfunctional, but simply because is rests upon a theorization of a whole, a One, which cannot exist. It is impossible to create an entirely new language, let alone one which does not refer to a primordial absence as its structuring principle.

Elizabeth Wright has argued that this last point, the notion that Irigaray's main concern lies in the development of the imaginary relation of the subject to the residue of jouissance from the 'maternal' relation, amounts to a massive misrepresentation of Irigarayan thought. She has claimed that the Lacanian reading of Irigaray has underestimated the extent to which the political facet of her work focuses precisely upon the creation of a "female symbolic."[31] I want to emphasize here that I do not discount the significance of this reading; I insist nevertheless that, as Wright herself more or less admits, Irigaray's rhetoric, in particular that which may be found in my citations from "Le corps-à-corps," makes insufficiently clear the manner in which the relation to the mother is to be

symbolized. As a result, the notion of the "powerful female symbolic" (121) remains muddled and confused.

I want to make a few brief suggestions here which may clarify the debate between Lacanian and Irigarayan feminism. Both Michèle Montrelay (to whom I am reductively referring here as a token figure for what I have termed "Lacanian feminism") and Irigaray would agree that women, or more accurately 'feminine' subjects, suffer from a less developed ability to symbolize, to represent the drive, given the fact that 'feminine' identification is effectuated at a greater distance from the law of castration than the 'masculine'. As I will examine in greater detail in Chapter 3, however, the difficulty with Irigarayan thought emerges in its conception of a masculinist symbolic, whereas on the Lacanian view the symbolic strictly speaking (outside of its anchoring by the imaginary relation to the phallic signifier) is ungendered. As a result, I maintain that the creation of a "female symbolic" (117) is a dead end precisely because its theorization misconstrues the relation between the subject's unconscious gender phantasy and the exclusively differential character of the symbolic register.[32]

My criticism of Irigaray becomes clearer when it is recognized that she conflates the symbolic and imaginary fathers, two notions which, despite periodic confusion, are at other times clearly demarcated by Lacan. The distinction between the fathers according to their agency in the different registers allows us to state, in a manner parallel to the Lacanian mother, the genderal unspecificity of the father. The imaginary father is the form phantasized by the subject during its identification, its misrecognition, of the heteropatriarchal father as representative of the law of castration. In other words, it is the father *qua* parental *imago* to whom the male subject conforms its bodily form at the developmental moment of the mirror stage, and whose anatomical penis is illusorily equated by the subject with the phallic signifier. The symbolic father is by contrast the structure of language which lends itself to the subject's differentiation from the substance of *jouissance*.[33] It is the very confusion of the symbolic and imaginary fathers that constitutes the symbolic order as androcentric. What Irigaray refers to as the "paternal language" is paternal only insofar as the phantasy of its ontology is maintained. The subject has no choice but to place itself within the structure of language, a structure which is always already there before the process of acculturation, of signification. It follows that to resist the *nom-du-père* is to resist the process of signification in its entirety, and to place oneself outside of the field of culture, that is to say outside the field of semantic influence.

Politically speaking, in the interests of a queer-feminist political praxis, it would be self-defeating to adopt the position of Irigaray. Rather, it is precisely by pointing out with adamancy that the heteropatriarchal father's identification with the position of the phallic signifier, and therefore with symbolic power, is illusory, that the forms of androcentrism in discourse inevitably act out their inadequacy in relation to their phantasmatically posited imaginary ideal, and that the subversion of androcentrism is thereby effected. On this view, it is not the agency *per se* of

the queer or feminist subject which is required by the Lacanian critique of androcentrism, viewed as enacted by the relentless unveiling of patriarchy's always already failed attempt to constitute, to enforce its relation to power. In other words, it is not by moving outside of the field of discourse to some supposedly prediscursive, untainted linguistic realm that the subversion of patriarchy becomes possible, but instead by interpreting, by highlighting the self-dramatized failure of the discourse of androcentrism to live up to the requirements of the impossible *Gestalt* with which it has identified.

On the Lacanian view, in other words, power lies beyond the sphere of the human subject or, more accurately, beyond the place where the subject *thinks* it is. The subject's relation to power over the word is always predicated upon a *méconnaissance* by which, during the process of oedipalization, it became subjectivized by culture in the first place. Far from attempting to attribute to women or 'homosexuals' a place of discursive authority from which to speak, a process which is necessarily doomed to failure, feminism should instead concern itself with the *analysis of patriarchy's identification with phallic privilege*, thereby 'deconstructing' the logic which entitles the subject-with-the-penis to the authority through which its phantasmatic mastery over the process of signification emerges. Any attempt to accord to women a specificity according to gender, body, eroticism, or anything else, must be viewed as anti-analytic, and ultimately self-defeating for feminism. As long as these attributions of female essence are maintained, they remain not only paradoxically, but fatally, vulnerable to an androcentric analytic critique.[34] If it is possible (and this should not for a moment be doubted) to destroy the illusion of the relation of the phallus to the specificity of the male sex, then it is equally possible to denaturalize any feminist claim to sexual discreteness, to any universal predicated upon the "female body."

Ellie Ragland-Sullivan sums up the problems posed to feminism by Irigaray (and by extension by any other feminist theorist who posits a feminine essence) when she states that "what Irigaray does not account for [...] are those things which Lacan himself leaves obscure in his various scriptings of the development of feminine sexuality: the primordial, maternal effects of the pre-mirror structures on both sexes."[35] It is precisely these effects which render problematic Irigaray's return to the maternal body. I want to state here that Ragland-Sullivan performs a massive reduction of what is, philosophically, an extremely complex, sophisticated, and challenging corpus when she claims that Irigaray blames "the male sex per se for woman's oppression" (280). Nevertheless, Ragland-Sullivan's claim that the question of gender radically transcends the realms of the political and the social is an important one. In other words, the important notion to assimilate from a Lacanian critique of Irigaray is that "sexual identity" as well as "gender distinctions" (280), whether in relation to the male or female subject, are always necessarily phantasmatic, and therefore have no bearing whatever upon the 'natural', the biological, the innate, the essential.

The subject may in no way 'live' its sex or gender. Sex and gender are always individual performances constituted by the subject's unconscious identification with a pre-given sexed and gendered position within the structure of language. The subject has no choice but to assume this position. At the same time, the subject may do nothing but prove in the 'performance' of its 'identity' the very impossibility of this identity's coherence. It is less a question of creating new sexes, new genders, than in demonstrating through analysis that these sexes and genders have already shown their inadequacy, their incoherence, their impossibility. The task of queer-feminist psychoanalysis should therefore be precisely the *analysis* of the phantasies of sex and gender identities and, by extension, the 'deconstruction' of the claim on the part of any one of these 'identities' to whatever form of discursive mastery or hierarchization.

As will be further elaborated in Chapter Two of the present work, the emphasis placed by many feminist and queer theorists upon the imaginary register *will not work*, for the simple reason that the ego, *tout court*, does not work. As Lacan stressed so vehemently at a great number of moments in his teaching, the subject's phantasy of bodily integrity is illusory, and its dialectical destiny is to have to deal with the *residue of identification* for the entirety of its life. This is where the distinction between the body *qua* ego-defense and the body *qua corps morcelé* gains its significance. The former is that by which the subject's gender identity is consolidated, the latter that by which this identity is inevitably put at risk. It is precisely this dialectic which will be of concern in the following chapter.

If the ego of the speaking subject, and by extension its gender, were to become stable, the world would undoubtedly be rid of its analysts. One begins to think that this is an entirely irrealistic proposition.

Notes

1 Jacques Lacan, *Séminaire II: Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse*, p. 93.

2 Beavoir writes that "le mâle a une vie sexuelle qui est normalement intégrée à son exitestence individuelle;" in addition, "son dépassement vers l'espèce se confond avec le moment subjectif de sa transcendance : il *est* son corps" (62). By contrast, however, "la femme, comme l'homme, *est* son corps : mais son corps est autre chose qu'elle" (66). Though Beauvoir concedes that the data of biology are insufficient to explain the material/ontological reality of women *qua* Other, she nevertheless establishes a binarism of sexed bodies by which women's supposed more significant alienation by the reproductive demands of the species is rationalized. Whereas the male body is inherently more suited to the "transcendence" of the species toward individual, existential freedom, the relation

of the female to her body is characterized by "emotionalism" and "frailty," and therefore by "immanence." See "Les données de la biologie," *Le deuxième sexe I : Les faits et les mythes*, pp. 35-76.

3 "Subjectivity is for Beauvoir activity, a restless projection into the future, a glorious surpassing of the iterativity of everyday life. The dreadful fall from transcendence into immanence is woman's estate. Consigned by the masterful male subject to passivity and repetition, woman in patriarchy is a prisoner of immanance." See Naomi Schor, "This Essentialism Which Is Not One: Coming to Grips with Irigaray," p.44.

4 Irigaray and Grosz are not the only feminist theorists of importance to 'return to the body' as of late. In her most recent book, *Bodies that Matter*, Judith Butler undertakes a comparable project in the context of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, albeit from a substantially different theoretical position, by positing the "lesbian phallus" as an alternative morphological imaginary. Butler's obfuscating *méconnaissance* of Lacanianism is dealt with in detail in Chapter 3 of the present work.

5 "Entre [les imagos parentaux] il en est qui représentent les vecteurs électifs des intentions agressives, qu'elles pourvoient d'une efficacité qu'on peut dire magique. Ce sont les images de castration, d'éviration, de mutilation, de démembrement, de dislocation, d'éventrement, de dévoration, d'éclatement de corps, bref, les *imagos* que personnellement j'ai groupées sous la rubrique qui paraît bien être structurale, d'*imagos du corps morcelé*." As I will show, it is precisely the destabilizing effect of these images suggestively listed by Lacan which will provide the human subject with an oppositional force by means of which its vulnerability to normative corporeal images may be partially occluded. See Lacan, "L'Agressivité en psychanalyse," *Écrits*, p. 104.

6 Of course, the charge of phallocentrism which has so often been brought against Lacan has by this point become a cliché. In the interests of more substantial and provocative analysis, I wish here to distinguish between two 'kinds' of phallocentrism, the one imaginary and the other symbolic. By imaginary phallocentrism I mean to refer to the phantasmatic process by which the human subject (usually, but not necessarily, male, but nevertheless always 'masculine') 'rationalizes' its relation to the phallic signifier by means of an illusory 'reference' to the anatomical penis. By symbolic phallocentrism I understand the requirement of the human subject to introject the paternal metaphor in such a way as to cover over by means of the phallic signifier the residue of maternal *jouissance*. In this manner, one may claim that one of the goals of Lacanianism is precisely to refer to the theory of symbolic phallocentrism in order to counter the effects of

the imaginary one. Thus, it is entirely correct to characterize Lacan as phallocentric, although not in the sense that one imagines his detractors intend.

7 "Notes Toward a Corporeal Feminism," p.8. Further references to this article are incorporated into the text.

8 Elisabeth Roudinesco claims that Lacan, frustrated by the interruptions of Ernest Jones during the presentation of his paper at Marienbad, refused to submit his communication to those responsible for the publication of the conference proceedings. As a result, there is no record of Lacan's first address on the topic of the mirror stage, hence the confusion documented by Jane Gallop in "Where to Begin," *Reading Lacan*, pp. 74-77. See Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan & Co.*, p. 133.

9 Lacan elaborates upon the various dialectical relationships among the three registers in "Le savoir et la vérité," at the beginning of which one may find a useful *schéma* on which the three slopes are indicated. See *Séminaire XX: Encore*, pp. 83-94. It is upon this particular slope (between the real and the imaginary) that the mediating function of the phallus is to be situated, a function which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

10 Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, pp. 364, 357.

11 Jacques Lacan, *Séminaire I: Les écrits techniques de Freud*, p. 193.

12 In French, possessive articles are of course gendered according to the object as opposed to the subject. Consequently, the charge of non-inclusive language should here be directed at the (unnamed) translator of the article. This is nevertheless not the case in the instance of Lacan's use of the universal "*l'homme*."

13 Jacques Lacan, "Some Reflections on the Ego," pp.12-13. Further references to this article shall be incorporated into the text.

14 "It is [...] the relation to the Other that sets the body image going, in that it is interposed between us and the world, and makes our relation to it a deeply eroticised, or more accurately, a narcissistic relation, having nothing in common with the relation between the living being and 'its' *Umwelt*." Moustapha Safouan, *Pleasure and Being*, p. 16.

15 Jacques Lacan, *Séminaire I*, p. 169.

16 Jacques Lacan, *Séminaire II*, p. 199.

17 See Lacan, "Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je," *Écrits*, pp. 93-100.

18 Jacques Lacan, "L'aggressivité en psychanalyse," p.117. Further references to this *écrit* shall be incorporated into the text.

19 Moustapha Safouan has stated that the relation between the paternal metaphor and the imaginary father is an arbitrary one, in fact only one particular manifestation of the way in which the function of symbolic castration may be associated by the subject to an 'other'. "Whatever happens, whatever may be its cultural fate, there is nothing to prevent the phallic image [from] being the unconscious effect of the authority of the paternal uncle, for example, if it pleases a society to designate he who occupies that symbolic position as the sovereign party to whom the mother's word is referred." Safouan also makes reference to the effect of wider social circumstances (birth control, artificial insemination) upon the particular form taken by the Oedipus in a given culture. See "Is the Oedipus Complex Universal?" p.281.

20 It should also be noted in this context of what exactly this universalizing structure consists. Shoshana Felman has shown in her analysis of the Lacanian Oedipus that its function is strictly structural, in the sense that it works not to impose normative gender identifications with the parental *imagos*, but to inaugurate the agency of the 'third term', of the big Other. "Not only is the analytic dialogue essentially performative (acting through illocutionary force) rather than informative (acting through its statements or its meanings); the analytical interpretation in itself is a performative (not cognitive) interpretation in that it has a fundamental structuring, transformative function. If analysis is necessarily always a reference to some 'other scene', it is to the extent that it takes place on the performative, other scene of language." See Felman, *Jacques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight: Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture*, p. 121.

In other words, the Oedipus functions as a means of effectuating castration, of introducing the young subject into the sphere of culture in which it learns to manipulate the signifier as a means of differentiation from 'maternal' *jouissance*. Thus, in answer to his question - is the Oedipus complex universal? - Safouan offers the following answer. "The Oedipus complex is in the end no more than *one cultural form* among others, those others being equally possible providing they perform the same function of *promoting the function of castration* in the psyche" (my emphasis). See "Is the Oedipus Complex Universal?" p.281.

[21] Jacques Lacan, "L'agressivité en psychanalyse," pp. 119-120. Further references are incorporated into the text.

[22] Drawing upon the work of Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, Parveen Adams asserts that it is precisely through the libidinal economy of the Freudian perversions that the severance of the phallic function from phantasmatic penile representation is effectuated. "The entry into desire is necessarily through castration and it is in the perversions that we see the possibility that the form desire takes will be freed from the penile representation of the phallus and freed into a mobility of representations." See Adams, "Of Female Bondage," p. 258. See also Bersani and Dutoit, *The Forms of Violence*. Jean Laplanche has written that "what is perverted is [...] the instinct, but it is as a vital function that it is perverted *by* sexuality." What may be concluded from these observations is that it is precisely perversion, the deflection of the instinct from the normative genital aim, that defines sexuality *qua* drive. Perversion, insofar as the subject lives out the effects of the drive, is universal. Consequently, the association of discursive mastery with the penile image phantasmatically performed by the patriarchal subject is *inevitably* jeopardized by the circuit of desire. See Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, p. 23.

[23] Jacques Lacan, "Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse," *Écrits*, p. 263.

[24] Luce Irigaray, *Sexes et parentés*, p.24. Further references to this book will be incorporated into the text.

[25] "Imagine two subjects. Either they kill one another or they intertwine, and they have no need of speech to do either; or else they can come to an agreement, which cannot be achieved without some speech determining their action and the rules of that action. But it is clear that neither of these two subjects has any voice but its own to support this speech, as it is clear that that voice alone cannot suffice to give it the authority for it to be accepted as mutually agreeable. So emerges the third party, He who speaks, the Other of the Other, to whom are assigned, as it were, the powers of enunciation." Moustapha Safouan, "Men and Women: A Psychoanalytic Point of View," p.285.

[26] See Slavoj Zizek's discussion of the *Che vuoi?* in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, pp.114-117.

27 It is for this reason that when Moustapha Safouan refers to the subject who embodies the maternal function in "Men and Women: A Psychoanalytic Point of View," he uses the expression "the mother or her surrogates" (286).

28 Luce Irigaray, *Sexes et parentés*, p. 31.

29 Lacan elaborates on the question of 'new things' in the symbolic order in the second *Séminaire*. Alluding to the homeostatic theory of the Freud of the pleasure principle, Lacan intervenes by stressing the importance of its 'beyond'. As Lacan says, "il y a quelque chose qui ne fonctionne pas là-dedans. *Au delà du principe du plaisir*, c'est cela, ni plus ni moins." At any rate, the quotation which should be of concern in this note is the following: "Quoi qu'on en pense - le discours que je vous tiens n'est pas en général coloré d'une tendance progressiste -, il y a quand même des émergences dans l'ordre du symbole." See Lacan, *Séminaire II*, p.80.

30 In her book *L'Ombre et le nom*, Michèle Montrelay refers to the clinincal 'experience' of psychoanalysis when she claims that the undifferentiated relation of 'maternal' *jouissance* to which Irigaray wishes to return manifests itself at the level of the subject not as plurivalent pleasure, but rather as chaotic anxiety. Alluding to remnants of this 'maternal' relation in the discourse of her analysands, Montrelay claims that "le patient qui, après coup, dit son angoisse, parle d'un temps où rien pour lui n'était plus pensable : le corps, le monde, alors se confondaient en une même intimité chaotique, trop présente, trop immédiate. Tout s'étalait dans une proximité, une plénitude insoutenables. Ce qui manquait, c'était un manque, un « espace » vide quelque part. Il semble bien, dans ces cas cliniques, que la dimension castratrice de la représentation ait fait défaut. Tout se passe, comme conséquent, comme si la représentation, tout du moins dans ses effets, s'était provisoirement annulée." The "lack of a lack" which defines *jouissance* is therefore not a state to which the subject wishes to return, given that it is in this relation that the mechanisms of signification break down. In other words, Irigarary's *parler-femme*, inasmuch as it refers to a supposedly pre-oedipal temporality, is an oxymoron. See Montrelay, *L'Ombre et le nom*, p. 64. This section of Montrelay's book is translated by Parveen Adams as "Inquiry into Femininity."

31 Elizabeth Wright, "Rereading Irigaray," p. 117. Further references to this article are incorporated into the text.

32 Perhaps the crux of the misunderstanding between the Irigarayans and the Lacanians lies in the conception of the relation between the imaginary and

symbolic registers. Elizabeth Wright claims that "the imaginary is an *effect* of the symbolic" (119), and it is presumably upon this misconstrued notion that she bases her argument for the necessity of a gynophilic, revamped symbolic. However, *in no way does the symbolic cause the narcissistic relation*; it is rather the void in the symbolic, the locus in which a signifier is 'missing' (i.e. *the real*), which causes the subject to adopt its imaginary relation to the phallic signifier. While it is true that the imaginary may only be deduced retroactively from the symbolic (in other words the fixating effects of identification may only be consciously accesses through the medium of *language*), it is incorrect to 'blame the symbolic' for the devaluation of women. Michèle Montrelay concludes her book with the following argument: "les femmes seraient en train de trouver « leur » langage. Ne faut-il pas dire plutôt : de plus en plus nombreuses, sont celles qui acceptent de laisser venir le langage - qui n'est *ni aux hommes, ni aux femmes*, là où est la *féminité Autre*, qui leur échappe [emphasis added]." In other words, Lacanian feminism seeks to enable the access of the 'feminine' subject to the (ungendered) signifier through the introjection of the law. In this sense, Montrelay's "féminité Autre" (Other femininity) is an entirely paradoxical formulation; it is only by means of entry into the field of the (ungendered) Other that 'true' 'femininity' is acquired. See Montrelay, *L'Ombre et le nom*, p. 163.

33 "[La jeune femme] ignore qu'une métamorphose s'est opérée dans sa parole. Elle ne sait pas que la présence de l'énoncé est devenue présence réelle de son propre corps. Ce qui résonne si plein et si vide, à son insu, est sa féminité, ou plutôt une certaine sorte de féminité, où le corps et le discours se confondent parce qu'ils se tiennent en deçà du désir : dans l'Autre." The discourse of the 'feminine' is thus for Montrelay that which evokes the remnants of the real relation to the substance of *jouissance*, the body of the subject indissociable from the archaic 'maternal' body. It is precisely this body which must be mediated throught the intervention of the signifier, of the "symbolic father." See Montrelay, *L'Ombre et le nom*, p. 35.

34 It is precisely this point which evades Naomi Schor in her attempt to recuperate the 'essentialism' of Irigaray in the context of a Derridean theoretical framework. In her often-cited, meritous, but confusing article "This Essentialism Which Is Not One," Schor claims that it is by means of a multi-levelled parodic mimesis that Irigaray attempts to accede to "the difference within difference" (48). However, Schor's analysis of Irigarayan mimicry as an "historical threat to the hegemony of the male sex" (47) obfuscates the manner in which Irigaray's fluid, multiple conception of femininity would somehow not become a "mere reversal of the existing phallocentric distribution of power" (48). Although I entirely agree with Schor's claim that accusations of 'essentialism' directed at either Irigaray or anyone else more often than not function to impede further analysis, the fact

remains that, even if Irigaray does take great pains to insist upon the 'difference' of her view of woman (i.e. that it does not constitute a specular clone of masculinist universalism), her insistence upon woman's privileged relation to the imaginary nevertheless renders her theory vulnerable to both accusations of phantasmatic utopianism and the effect of exclusionary 'othering' inherent in the structure of the phantasy. See Schor, "This Essentialism which Is Not One: Coming to Grips with Irigaray."

35 Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, *Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis*, p.280. Further references will be incorporated into the text.

2. Glück with Lacan: Bob's *Modernist* Analysis

> My misfortune was that I lacked Jack's love; Jack's cock was the toothpick that stabilized my club sandwich of being and nothingness.[1]
>
> Is the nameless body the key to [...] every mystery?[2]
>
> - Robert Glück

The emergence during the past decade of an experimental school of writers in Los Angeles and San Francisco, a group self-christened the "New Narrative," has posed pertinent questions to contemporary literary culture.[3] Among the characteristic features of this group's work is a radical problematization of conventional narrative form, an exploration of the representability of queer sexualities in prose narrative, and a commitment to left politics. Besides such figures as Kevin Killian, Bruce Boone, and Dennis Cooper, one of the most interesting members of this school is Robert Glück, a gay San Francisco short story writer, novelist, poet, and critic, whose most important works thusfar have been the novel *Jack the Modernist* (1985) and the collection *Elements of a Coffee Service* (1982).

Of the manifold themes and concerns present in the *oeuvre* of Robert Glück, an obsession with the dynamics of the relationship between desire, (gay male) sexuality, language, community, and meaning is perhaps the most compelling and profound. It is not surprising, then, that in the little critical response Glück has received in the American academy, it is precisely these concerns which are addressed. In his pioneering article "Scandalous Subjects: Robert Glück's Embodied Narratives," Earl Jackson, Jr. analyzes the work of Glück as a paradigm for the narrative imagination of the sexed gay male body, stressing the extent to which Glück's experimental narrativization of his desire for other men creates the possibility for a radical subversion of phallic and patriarchal constructions of male bodies and sexualities. On the view of Jackson's thesis, these otherwise-imagined bodies would create a more desirable alternative to the "monocentric [phallic] and apotropaic" heterosexual male body, imagined by dominant culture as "sexually actualized as a weapon in defense of its own paranoic integrity."[4]

Jackson is here basing his argument upon readings of texts dealing with psychoanalytic theory by such writers as Michèle Montrelay, Klaus Theweleit, and Sander Gilman.[5] He draws upon these writers' theorizations of normative heterosexual masculinity for his own project to distinguish between the heterosexual male's anxious and narcissistic insistence upon the preservation of the ego, and the 'gay' male's imaginary potential for a less centered, defensive, and integral subjectivity. Referring to this binarism of sexual 'orientation', Jackson

posits a fundamental narratological difference between the discourse of the male heteroerotic, which is paranoically concerned at all textual moments with the preservation of the illusory and projected ego boundaries, and the discourse of the male homoerotic, which seeks, by means of a sexual intersubjective encounter with the other, and a 'transcendent' accession to the bodily real, to dissolve the imaginary fixity of the egoic form.

Jackson also relies in his article upon a structuring distinction, derived from Lacanian psychoanalytic discourse, between what he terms the "specular" (imaginary) and "narrative" (symbolic) articulations of 'gay' male subjectivity in contemporary gay male fiction (114). One of the points of the article is to evoke an alternative imaginary construction of the male body which counters the fear of loss of self during the ejaculation of sperm, codified in the male heterosexual imaginary as the self's 'essence', into the vagina of the female partner in penile-vaginal intercourse. I would like to explore in this chapter the manner in which Jackson's reading of Glück, despite its admirable intention to break up the dominant masculinist imaginary, nevertheless glosses over some of the more radical implications of the Lacanian theorization of the subject. Jackson's analysis falls victim to what I perceive to be a complicitous and idealized view of the imaginary register. I would argue that his thesis is dangerous in at least three ways: first, in its essentialist positing of a binary distinction between a normative male heterosexual imaginary and what I must also call a normative homosexual imaginary; second, in its conflation of the model for the subject's morphological embodiment with the object of desire; and third, in its utopianist idealization of gay sex as the locus of an oxymoronical "intersubjective narcissism."[6]

Above and beyond the problems with Jackson's approach, I will also focus upon, first, the manner in which Glück attempts to inscribe the bodily real *qua* residue of narcissistic identification within his narrative and, next, the strategies through which the psychic energy released by this disruption may be capitalized upon for the development of oppositional consciousness and community activism. By contrast to Jackson, then, my effort will be to displace the emphasis placed in his article, as well as in queer theory in general, from the rapturous and utopian, symptomatic rhetoric of the imaginary to both the disruptive real which puts the imaginary in jeopardy and the mediation of the signifier which places the subject within the context of a language community.

As will become apparent in the course of my analysis, it is precisely this recognition of the alienating effect of imaginary identification towards which Glück's narrative advances. As evidenced in *Jack the Modernist* by Bob's erotic fascination with the body, and more specifically the cock, of his lover, this identification is psychically precipitated through the imaginary projection of the morphological other as the subject's ego. It is this identification which symptomatizes the narrator's disavowal of symbolic castration. On a more concrete level, this identification entraps the queer subject in a dangerous and

alienating stasis that paradoxically occludes the possibility for the development of a politically effective and radical sexual politics.

The aim of this chapter will therefore be to analyze Glück's novel *Jack the Modernist* as a fictional correlative of the mechanism of a Lacanian analysis: a trialogic process which calls into question, in its climactic, revolutionary, *analytic* moment, the imaginary identifications which prevent the subject from assuming its own history. It is by means of this analytic *prise de conscience* that the subject becomes both an agent in its own development and an ethical member of an oppositional community. My argument will stress the extent to which Jackson's analysis glosses over what I perceive to be Glück's own awareness of the dangers of imaginary identification to the politically aware and active 'gay' subject. I will also underline the novel's concordant emphasis upon the necessity to translate phantasmatic stasis into the symbolic narrativization of political community. As I will show, this process occurs in the text by means of the narrator's cognizance of the trialectic tension between the formalism of the narcissistic relation, the differential structure of language, and the disruptive real of desire.

1. Bodily Ascension: Sublimation and the Signifier

As discussed in the previous chapter, the mirror stage is a developmental phase during which the six to eighteen month old child learns to differentiate its body from the environment. This occurs during the subject's imaginary identification of its ego boundaries by means of the projected effectuation of bodily integrity derived from either the fictive, specularized image of itself in the mirror or the corporeal form of the mother or primary care giver. The process of primary identification also entails the topological and libidinal organization of the bodily surface, a process which renders the subject vulnerable to both the corporeal images projected upon the various screens of culture (media images, *imagos*, ideals of embodiment, etc.) and the epidermal sensations derived from its contact with objects. Kaja Silverman summarizes the effects of mirror-stage acculturation upon the infant subject, the Lacanian *infans*.

> The child's body undergoes a process of differentiation, whereby erotogenic zones are inscribed and libido is canalized (i.e. encouraged to follow certain established routes). Specific somatic areas are designated as the appropriate sites of pleasure, and the areas which are so designated are all ones which open onto the external world - most importantly the mouth, the anus, the penis and the vagina. The mother is the usual agent of this inscription, defining the erotic zones through the care she lavishes upon them.
>
> The territorialization of the infant's body provides the means whereby the outpouring of libido can be directed and contained. [...] Indeed, by organizing the infant's body in relation to its reproductive potential, the

> mother or nurse already indicates the form which that cultural regulation will take: the orchestration of the drives around sexual difference.[7]

Lacanianism considers the condition of cultural subjectivity to be the illusory fixation of an innately and fundamentally unsignifiable and excessive bodily experience which returns, in the form of the death drive, to break and disrupt both the imaginary identification of the ego with the form of the body of the m/other, and the normative canalization of the libido elucidated in the above quotation. The subject's drives are therefore integrated into a structuring dialectic which pits the illusion of bodily mastery and unity reminiscent of *jouissance* against the ego-destructive death instinct. It is the latter force which prevents the subject from becoming permanently fixated upon the projected *imago* of the other, and therefore a passive receptacle for the messages of the dominant culture. If the human subject has no choice but to be acculturated according to libidinal normativity, it must be stressed that this mapping out of the body remains forever incomplete; it is continually jeopardized by the inevitable return of the anarchic residue excluded from the body's imaginary boundary.

It is worthwhile mentioning how, at this stage in her career, Silverman seems to accept the notion that the erotogenic mapping-out of the body of the infant by the mother functions to highlight those erotogenic zones associated with the infant's reproductive *potential* (as opposed to *function*). While Silverman is clearly leaving room for the conceptualization of the contingent, and therefore not 'natural' or necessary, future capacity of the infant to procreate, I do not agree with her implication that the psychic imagination of the body occurs in a manner which *must* accord precedence to the 'reproductive' organs or that, if this oedipalized body is necessary, that it cannot be *unlearned*, *occluded*, at a later date.[8] For Glück's narrator, at any rate, eroticism is the means by which the bodily excess repressed during oedipalization may be accessed in a way which momentarily allows the subject to escape from, to transcend, the constraining limits of its bodily *Gestalt*. In other words, it is by means of the erotic that the Glückian subject accesses the body *qua* residue of the *corps morcelé*, that is to say the disruptive remnants which fragment the forms through which corporeal normativity is perpetuated. It is to this "somewhere new" that the Glückian narrator is transported during the sexual encounter.

> Somewhere new - an excess in which my body goes rigid, eyes flicker like a home movie, time separates into frames, sounds sputter, a soft commotion like shuffling cards or a tumult of batting wings. I'm pleased to be told later that in fact I did ascend: "Congratulations, from excess your body rose straight up seventy-five feet or more." *I'm already on my way - I just don't want to be detained.*[9]

If the sublime mystery of the erotic is precisely the transportation of the subject beyond the rigidity of its own ego-boundaries, entailing access to the 'dangerous' realm of bodily residue, there is also, however, a menace in the necessary relation of this residue to the erotic jubilation of imaginary identification. In other words, the limited freedom negotiable by means of access to the *corps morcelé* nevertheless remains in dialectical conflict with the fascinating clean and proper body (*le corps propre*).[10] A tendency toward fixation, toward what Slavoj Zizek calls "surplus enjoyment,"[11] arises from the captation of the subject by the illusion of identificatory plenitude reminiscent of 'maternal' *jouissance*. Without the required mediation effected by the symbolic translation of bodily experience, the subject is condemned to the lifelessness and passivity of inescapable, dyadic specularity. It is precisely this linguistic translation which must be viewed as the means by which the subject becomes a part of an oppositional community, thereby mounting cultural resistance to the normative discursive messages of sexual difference and heterosexual object-choice.

In the passages outlining the narrator's initial fascination with the mysterious and secretive Jack, Glück makes it abundantly clear that Bob's captation by the image of his soon-to-be lover is contiguous with mirror-stage identification. More specifically, Jack begins to function psychically as the narrator's *objet petit a*, the retroactively posited cause of desire which masks what Zizek refers to as the "black hole" in the real (19). This 'black hole' is an immovable void constitutive of both the Lacanian 'barred' subject and the discursive landscape (the big Other). To translate from the Lacanian vocabulary, it is the narrator's imaginary fascination with Jack's sexually enticing body which covers over the imperfection of the narrator's phenomenological grasp of his world. The object relation recalls for the subject an archaic, mythic time when it was not yet differentiated from the mother's body. The subject's relation of fascination with the object is not strictly pleasurable, however; Bob's dependence upon the phantasy *qua* ontological structuring principle also serves to render the object's alien, uncanny power. As I will discuss, this second aspect of the *objet petit a* emerges in the narrator's awareness of Jack's fundamental otherness: his mysteriousness, his aloofness, his ungraspability, his betrayals.

Jack's function in the narrator's psychic economy is divulged in one particularly important sequence of the novel which depicts Bob's and Jack's lovemaking. The focalization of the narrator's subjectivity during this particular sexual encounter returns again and again to the central facticity of Jack's cock, to its function as the positor of presence, of ontological certainty, and therefore, in Lacanian terms, of an illusory phantasmatic projection upon the real, fundamental absence underlying all experience of desire. Jack's penis begins to work for Bob the narrator as the signifier of residual *jouis-sens* (enjoy-meant), of the unity of "the One,"[12] which are simultaneously both the structuring principle of imaginary identification, that is to say the guarantor of the subject's meaning for the Other, as well as the archaic remnants of the pre-oedipal 'maternal' relation.

Paradoxically, however, at the point at which Bob translates the residue of 'maternal' *jouissance* into language, he introduces with the signifier a mediating third term which severs the unsymbolized link with the substance of enjoyment. In this manner, Bob begins the endless string of substitutions by which he will attempt to evoke his desire. By positing a signifier as metaphor for the object relation, he narrativizes for the (imagined) community the always-elusive 'meaning' of gay (or any kind of) sex, thereby transcribing into the *public* realm of language what is usually conceived as a *private* encounter.

In the passage of the novel quoted below, the dialectical tension posited by Lacan between the stasis and fixity of imaginary identification and archaic enjoyment (Jack's cock as the body of the undifferentiated mother/subject, as the fetish object that maintains the illusion of the phallic mother - first paragraph), and the string of substitutions of the endless movement, or slide, of desire (the list of things, the signifying chain, that Jack's cock *represents*, or *allegorizes* - second paragraph) manifests itself in a particularly ludic and arresting fashion.

> I loved to suck [Jack's] cock: the sheer exhileration I feel each time of finding and having what pertains to me, what I pertain to. Its authority is so commanding it can afford enticement and subtlety. I want to tell you who I am; I want to be told who I am: the rock bottom agreement that rejects any possibility of substitution whether it is a cock or a lady's shoe or a lover or a baby or a statue of the Virgin - to refuse all meaning in favor of this meaning.
>
> The world, refused, gathers there, generating endless fertility of metaphor which supports rather than challenges the inevitability of Jack. I grab his cock, unpromising, and he says in mock bewilderment, "What's that?" As it hardens I answer for him, "It's my appendicitis, my inchworm, my slug, my yardstick, my viola da gamba, my World Trade Centre, my banana, my statutory rape, my late string quartet [...]."[13]

It becomes clear in the first paragraph of the above passage that Bob's fetishization of his partner's penis allows him to mask, to veil, his own ontological otherness, the origin of his *moi* at the position of the other, by means of the discursive 'authority' which sex with Jack provides. In other words, Jack's penis adopts the function of that by which the castration of the 'mother' is veiled and the truth of the (castratable) phallus is occluded. As suggested by David Macey, "if the function of the phallus is to put an end to the otherwise eternal sliding of the signifier and thereby to provide a minimal stability of meaning, it can only be [...] a transcendental element which determines other elements in the system, or even a metaphysical construct."[14] The "metaphysical" status of the phallus in Glück's text therefore emerges as the narrator's conflation of the phallic signifier with the imaginary 'meaning' suggested by Jack's cock.[15]

What I would like to stress here is the imaginary function of the phallus/penis in the psyche of Bob the narrator, in particular its function as, first, the guarantor of fixed meaning, stable identity, and ontological presence, as well as, second, the agent through which (sexual) difference is denied.[16] At one point in the resonant passage concerned, the narrator explains that his and Jack's lovemaking is "not so much an achievement of communication or affection as of *imagination*."[17] This statement underlines the importance of the facticity of Jack's penis (as synechdocal substitute for the morphological form of the object of desire) in the narrator's egoic *méconnaissance*. However, the "fertility of metaphor" signified by Glück's evocation of the 'meanings' of Jack's cock functions within the psychodynamics of the text as the indicator of the means by which imaginary egoic identification may also give rise to an emancipatory symbolic translation. In other words, Bob's fixation upon Jack's cock, symptomatic of his more fundamental identification with Jack *qua Idealich* (ideal ego), is the root cause of what a Lacanian analyst would probably consider the narrator's "aggressivity."[18] Narratively speaking, this affect manifests itself through Bob's jealousy of Jack's involvement with Joe-Toe (53), and his curiously unfulfilling sexual escapades at the baths (57-60). Until Bob manages to integrate his relationship with Jack into a wider social context through the mechanism of *symbolization*, this relationship can only serve to highlight the alienation characteristic of imaginary 'love'.

Put less theoretically, Bob's alienation may be considered a function of his futile attempt to protect his 'ideal image' of Jack against the latter's less than ideal behaviour (he keeps secret several relationships with 'fuck-buddies' during his affair with Bob). The reassuring, "rock"-like stability resulting from Bob's fixation with his furtive lover is sharply contrasted by the narrator with the endless, triadically structured slide of desire referred to by the analytic translation of the object relation into language. No longer subjected to the anxiety produced by the inconsistency between the imaginary Jack and the bodily real, Bob learns to negotiate language in such a way as to impose a third term in the relation. The grammar of desire is articulated by the evocation of the *representative*, or *allegorical*, function of Jack's cock. It is precisely this movement into the sphere of language which constitutes the essence of the radical moment of the Lacanian analytic process.

Michèle Montrelay's work on the question of 'femininity' provides a means of further shedding light on the movement evoked by Glück from residual 'maternal' *jouissance* to the pleasure of signification.[19] Referring to her own analytic technique, Montrelay argues that the function of the analyst is to put in place "a representation of castration," thereby making "sexuality pass into discourse."[20] Montrelay views the utterance of the analyst as a fundamentally metaphorical one - one which in effect "sublimates" the relation of non-differentiation.[21] By responding to the phantasy of the subject with a word which resonates with its discourse, the analyst 'reminds' the subject of the symbolic

castration the denial of which is its desire. In this context, one may refer to Bob's metaphorization of Jack's cock as a kind of self-performed analysis; it is through the intervention of the signifier that pleasure is accessed. Whereas the fixity of meaning suggested by the first paragraph of the above quotation (40) translates into claustrophobic closeness and jealous anxiety, it is only with Bob's manipulation of the signifier in the second paragraph that the pleasure of the erotic encounter is actually accessed. In this sense, it is not the erotic *qua* physical act of copulation which is pleasurable, but rather its *symbolization*.

Glück's insights regarding the relation between presymbolic *jouissance* and the function of signification may also be discerned in the narrator's equation of the pleasure of being anally penetrated by Jack with the nostalgic imaginary memory of the pre-oedipal relation to the 'mother'. Acknowledging that language falls short of the ability to describe the sublimity of this moment, Bob nevertheless states that anal eroticism represents for him a "union beyond Jack so absolute it lacks a name." In his attempt to express the sensations of his orgasm in language (in other words to 'do the impossible'), the narrator explains that while being fucked by Jack he visits "a country that always exists beyond [him]. [He] approach[es] it with increasing familiarity because [he] ha[s] been in exile and this is [his] primitive home; in fact, its familiarity comes to equal [him]self" (29).

Glück's language allows us here to relate this nostalgia for wholeness, integrity, and symbiosis to the state of the foetus in the mother's womb, undifferentiated from the environment, afloat in the amniotic fluid. This relation also corresponds to the "transitivism"[22] demonstrated by the pre-oedipal infant as it responds to the pain experienced by other bodies as if it were its own. In the context of the novel, this "absolute" "union" is forever beyond the narrator's reach because the sensations of *jouissance* are predicated upon a primordial illusion; Jack's cock, in other words, despite the machinations of the narrator's imaginary, is not, nor may it ever replace, the body of the 'mother'. The illusion which allows for this equation is Jack's function in Bob's imaginary as his *alter ego*. I want to underline at this point that my reading does not imply or suggest that Glück's narrative vision of gay male sex is somehow critical of the possibility for emotional intimacy, for intersubjectivity, or that the strictly physical experience of sex, in its real, unsymbolizable sublimity is somehow 'bad', irreconcilable to 'mental health', or emotionally 'damaging'.

My contention is rather that Glück's scintillating passages depicting the lovemaking of his narrator to the object of desire present the possibility of articulating a Lacanian dialectic between, on the one hand, the pleasurable and socially significant effects of the metaphorical evocation of *jouissance* and, on the other, the hypostatizing fascination with the alien *Bildung* that functions to solidify Bob's fixation upon a union "so absolute it lacks a name." It is this captation on the part of the narrator by the object of his narcissistic passion which resists the emergence of desire in language. This desire would allow for the

symbolic translation of the bodily real into discourse: a subversive, but forever inadequate, attribution of signifiers to the unfixable 'meaning' of sex that would function to destabilize, as much as this is possible, the heterosexist interdiction latent in the patriarchal imaginary.

2. Death, Desire, and the Analytic Moment

I have alluded, in the previous chapter, to the relation between the function of death and ego destabilization in the psychic life of the subject. It therefore makes a lot of sense that the incident of a senseless death coincides in *Jack the Modernist* with the narrator's frustration at his imaginary captation. Just as Bob begins to fathom the reasons behind Jack's emotional unavailability, he receives a phone call from his friend Phyllis who informs him of the tragic loss of her son to a deranged murderer. This incident suggests a textual link between, on the one hand, the precariousness of Bob's relation to Jack *qua* object and, on the other, the fundamental absurdity, inevitability, and non-sense of death. The shooting of Phyllis' son functions, on the Lacanian view, as the intrusion of the real of history, the real of desire, into the life of the narrator. Slavoj Zizek describes the Lacanian real as the breaking down of a symbolic network which functions to frame a screen upon which our phantasies are projected. The real is

> simultaneously both the hard, impenetrable kernel resisting symbolization and a pure chimerical entity which has in itself no ontological consistency. To use Kripkean terminology, the Real is the rock upon which every attempt at symbolization stumbles, the hard core which remains the same in all possible worlds (symbolic universes); but at the same time its status is thoroughly precarious; it is something that persists only as failed, missed, in a shadow, and dissolves itself as soon as we try to grasp it in its positive nature.[23]

The Lacanian real may be compared to the Freudian trauma, to the intrusion of a seething, abhorrent event into the comfortable, controlled, sensical appearance or surface of everyday bourgeois life. "The 'reality' [of the symbolic] [...] obtains its consistency only by means of the 'black hole' in its center (the Lacanian *das Ding*, the Thing that gives body to the substance of enjoyment), i.e., by the exclusion of the real, by the change of the status of the real into that of a central lack."[24] The real is thus the intrusion of the meaninglessness of the void into the carefully wrought and finely honed narratives with which we attempt to make sense of our lives. Bob's inability to derive significance from the pleasure of casual sex at the baths, or again the indescribable plenitude of his anal orgasm with Jack, are both textually compared to his emotional breakdown after Phyllis's call. Both of these experiences function as manifestations of the Freudian death drive

which is taken up by Lacan in his notion of aggressivity: the compulsion of the subject to repeat the occurrence of the trauma.

As I will discuss in the final section of this chapter, Glück's critical writings demonstrate how he has intuited (if not read up on) *après la lettre*, one could say, the Lacanian notion of the real and its relation to death. Suffice it to say at this point that Glück, in a manner, translates Lacan's dialectic between the registers of the imaginary and the real into his own formulations of the "local" and the "sublime." Relating the Kantian notion of the sublime (although he does not refer explicitly to Kant) to the "anarchic body," Glück goes on to describe this category in his particular poetical mode as "nothing, piercing laughter, a catastrophe, a fire at night, a violent orgasm - anything that expresses a void which our communities have filled with religions and monsters in order to understand the absense of ground."[25] Anyone who is familiar with Lacan's elaboration of the real in his later teaching, in the *Séminaire* on ethics, or in *Encore*, for example, will immediately be struck by Glück's uncanny evocation of the third and most sublime of the Lacanian registers. Contrasted to the "local," which refers to a given community's phantasmatic image of itself as a transparent, knowable geography, the Glückian sublime refers to those aspects of community experience which lie beyond the reach of the nameable, beyond the moral boundaries it establishes in order to define itself.

Neither is it a difficult task to establish a relation between Glück's conception of the community's surplus and Freud's theorization of the recurring elements of his analysands' discourse. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud was unable to come to terms with the insistence of his subjects upon reliving the anxiety traceable to traumatic memories. He could not rationalize the apparent contradiction between the pleasure principle's tendency to level out the quantity of psychic excitation in the organism, and the masochistic insistence of the subject to disrupt this principle of constancy by means of the unpleasurable intrusion of unbounded energy into consciousness. Richard Boothby has convincingly expounded upon the function of the subject's drive to fracture the solidity, the formalism, of the ego.

> Properly understood, Lacan's notion of aggressivity restores the central point of Freud's view: aggressivity is a function of a primordial destructiveness *toward oneself*. The whole point of Lacan's "Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis," as is evident from its first page, is to shed some light "on the enigmatic significance that Freud expressed in terms of the *death instinct*."[26] Aggressivity for Lacan is tied to death - "aggressivity gnaws away, undermines, disintegrates; it castrates; it leads to death" [10] - but not only to someone else's death. Lacan's approach allows us to understand anew why Freud claims that violence directed toward other persons or objects is traceable to an essentially self-destructive impulse. Freud explained the dynamic in terms of a "turning outward" of an original

> self-destructive force. Thus Freud claims that "a portion of the [death] instinct is diverted towards the external world and comes to light as an instinct of aggressiveness and destructiveness."[27]

One of the suggestions made by Boothby's analysis as regards Glück's text relates to the function of death, of limit, of finitude, in the disruptive pressure exerted upon the imaginary ego. The insistence of Freud's patients to relive their traumatic encounters, the technique of Lacan to end his sessions with his patients at the least expected moment, the intrusion of the real of death into Bob the narrator's life, all of these things lead the subject to recognize the ahistorical fixity to which the insistence upon the ego gives rise. It is only when we realize, in other words, the precariousness and temporality of our lives that we may assume a responsible relation to our own histories. It is by means of this realization that the subject learns how to symbolize a link between the illusion of the self/community, the 'meaningless' social contract of language, and the unsignifyable beyond of the subject's experience. In the context of *Jack the Modernist*, it is only at the moment when the narrator begins to explain to himself in language the anger and alienation provoked by his relationship with Jack that he is capable of negotiating a psychic 'translation' between his need of an object, the sublime of eroticism, and his desire to lead a public, political life.

The function of speech and language, which Lacan at all moments insisted must be the primary concern of the psychoanalytic dialogue, is to access, to bring to consciousness, by means of the phenomenon of transference, the ideas, persons, or parties to which we have surrendered allegiance and *blind faith* (as opposed to Sartrean *bad faith*). The moment when the subject assumes its own history is the point at which it enters the human sphere, the sphere of desire. It is through the endless metaphorical substitutions of 'full speech' that the subject relentlessly signifies the *objet petit a*, the object of fixity and stasis. It is precisely with the function of speech that the subject places between itself and the object a mediating term which decreases the subject's innate vulnerability to the image, and which allows for the partial occlusion of the effects of the patriarchal imaginary.

To refer back to the novel, it is only at that moment when Bob verbally/linguistically evokes the elusive, unfixable 'meaning' of his relation to Jack in terms of his own subjectivity that he momentarily evades the alienation of his captation by the penile image. "Writing," says Glück's narrator, to which I would add speaking,

> channels the world into words once it's understood how piecemeal we are, like gossip, bits and fragments from beyond the grave, added, circulated, altered and withdrawn for the sake of expediency or in the spirit of revenge or in response to an absolute that lacks a name. Embracing that thought is embracing the world.[28]

The turning point in Glück's novel occurs as the narrator begins to become aware of both Jack's imaginary function and this function's effect upon Bob's inability to live independently as a politically *engagé* 'gay' man. The aspect of this realization which I wish to emphasize here is that it is by means of the writing process, a process which, like analysis, relies upon the word as opposed to the image, that Bob manages to bring the object relation to consciousness. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the character of the imaginary relation is narcissistic; the formation of the ego, as has already been indicated, necessitates, presupposes, and is (ontologically) constituted by the image of the other. Desire, unmediated by the language of the unconscious, is primarily, because alienated, hermetic and autoerotic. It is in this sense that Lacan adopts the Hegelian formulation that the subject's desire is the desire of the other. The narcissistic structure of the object relation causes the subject to become the object of its own alienated desire, thereby relinquishing the possibility for the determination of a(n) (semi-) autonomous subjectivity.

It is during this moment of recognition on the part of the subject that the function of imaginary love is narcissistic and fixating that the true locus of the subject in the unconscious is made manifest. The passages transcribed below sketch the process through which Bob begins to acknowledge that fact that his idealization of/identification with Jack has nothing whatever to do with Jack as he 'really' is. Jack *qua* sublime *Doppelgänger* is now viewed by Bob as that which prevents him from getting on with his life, from reintegrating himself in the social network of relations contitutive of the symbolic field, from living ethically within a phantasmatic community of gay men. It is in the following passages that Bob manages to bring the object relation to consciousness, to establish the mediation of the signifier, and to ground a place for himself in the symbolic network from which to signify his desire. At what may nicely be viewed as the Lacanian analytic moment of the text, Bob the narrator explains that his

> deepest eroticism occurred in Jack's absence, even [his] imagination couldn't break through [Jack's] self-containment. [Bob's] images were of [him]self; it was [him]self who became continuous, flexible. [Their] affair took the form of [Bob's] erotic revery and [his] skin touching [his own] skin. Jack had withdrawn from the course of events but not from their beauty. Jack and [Bob] had become *imaginary*; he brought [Bob] to the boiling point and left [him] to boil steadily away. (117, emphasis added)

> Pursuit committed [Bob] like a bullet but as a target [Jack] was circles spreading outward; when [Bob] approached [Jack's] parts flew off. [Bob] had *projected integration*, an impossible expense of energy. What could unify a person at such close quarters - love? hatred? [He] had made Jack coherent but elusive, [his] complex organizing principle had produced a complexity whose disjunctions were small enough to convey an impression

> of depth, of secrets; suddenly Jack appeared merely disorganized, subnormal, ramshackle and jerry-built, and [he] was committed to *nonsense*. (119, emphasis added)

> Jack was [Bob's] totally evil enemy - [Bob] began to understand that. (123)

> [Bob] said good-bye to the ["him"] who lived through Jack. It was time to *say it out loud*. [Bob] had refrained out of cowardice but [his] position was intolerable; *verbally [he] was nowhere. Speech would give shape and a tense to the bad news and signal the beginning of a mourning period*. (126, emphasis added)

Lacan said in his celebrated *Discours de Rome* that "si le sujet ne retrouvait dans une régression, souvent poussée jusqu'au stade du miroir, l'enceinte d'un stade où son *moi* contient ses exploits imaginaires, il n'y aurait guère de limites assignables à la crédulité à laquelle il doit succomber dans cette situation."[29] Lacan underlines in this utterance the primary goal of psychoanalysis: the coming-into-being in the subject, through the phenomenon of regression, of the capacity to recognize the shape of its ego in the various interiorized others which have prevented the severance of the illusion of totality, of authority, of grounded and permanent meaning. When Bob says that he has "projected integration," he means that he now recognizes that Jack has functioned for him as the *Gestalt* which disallowed him the opportunity to narrativize the 'meaning' of the Other in his own life. The 'mourning period' alluded to at the beginning of the moment of speech refers to the death of Bob's ego, the part of him that "lived through Jack." If Bob had not reached this point of awareness or, on a larger theoretical level, if the subject did not have recourse to the intervention of the signifier, Lacan suggests that there is no possible limit to the subject's utter and total belief in the illusory object, in the potentially omnipotent Thing.

The narrator's discovery of Jack's infidelities allows him to acknowledge the distortion and illusion inherent in his *image* of Jack; it is not until what I have referred to as the analytic moment of the text that Bob can discover the existence of Jack's numerous "fuck-buddies," of his "three long-term lovers," and of the "orgies" he attended without Bob's knowledge (163). Referring to the massive psychic investment of the object relation, Bob admits that he "can't account for this huge foolish expense that doesn't buy meaning or any consolation for being separated from [his mother]" (139). To the (limited) extent to which one may claim that Lacan articulated to the participants in his seminar a 'worldview', the Glückian narrator expresses it here in a disarmingly direct and comprehensible fashion. The human subject, for Glück as for Lacan, is fundamentally split, alienated, set adrift from the primordial symbiotic relationship with the 'mother', whose absence becomes the "black hole in the real," the primordial abyss desire will forever attempt, forever frustrated, to recuperate. The inescapable consequence is

our vulnerability to the image, our need of others to adopt both a (self-) consciousness and a place in discourse from which to speak, and the therapeutic necessity of analysis, of writing, of speech, of poetry.

I want to argue that it is immensely important that we look at the effects of Bob's analysis-without-an-analyst upon his frame of mind.[30] To what, in other words, does the linguistic/analytic representation of Bob's relationship with Jack lead? What is the effect of Glück's/Bob's self-analysis?[31] Immediately following his insights regarding the statizing function of Jack's image in his psychic life, Bob attends a one-man drag show, Silvana Nova's *Chiang Ching: A Valic Revolutionary Drama*, an event which gathers "San Francisco's gay left" (147). The campy and subversive peformance of the story of a young Chinese woman struggling for power in male-dominated revolutionary China suggests a political awareness enabled by Bob the narrator's analytic *prise de conscience*. I would suggest that it is no coincidence that, at the moment Bob comes to terms with his alienating imaginary identification with Jack, he feels compelled to participate in a community activity, a theatrical representation which at once puts into radical question the fixed identity of gender categories and the economic structures of capitalism.

Neither must it be viewed as unimportant that the "great erotic warm-up" of the event encourages Bob the narrator to pick up Gary, with whom he then shares the rest of the evening. The message of the fortune cookie opened by Chiang as the dramatized Cultural Revolution begins relates not only to the play-within-a-novel, but to Glück's fictional project as well: "THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS ART FOR ART'S SAKE, ART THAT STANDS ABOVE CLASSES, ART THAT IS DETACHED FROM AND INDEPENDENT OF POLITICS" (148). By choosing to stress the political self-consciousness raised by a community event at the end of the novel, Glück emphasizes the ramifications for oppositional cultural intervention of his narrator's assumption of his own history. It is by giving up the futile effort to bridge the gap constitutive of his being-in-the-world with the arresting and politically self-defeating stasis of imaginary identification that Bob the narrator manages to step into the human sphere, the sphere of desire. By contrast to the bulk of the novel in which Bob's psychic investment in his phantasy of Jack dominates, Bob's self-analysis effectuates a symbolic re-integration into the community which compromises neither his erotic interest in other men, nor his ability to experience the pleasures of the body. It is precisely through Bob's decision to sacrifice the full effect of the anchoring object relation in favour of the more precarious and formless language of desire that he becomes a Lacanian subject.

3. Queer Theory and Symbolic Politics

To conclude this chapter, I want to draw upon Glück's idiosyncratic poetical-critical writings in order to begin to theorize the notion of 'community'

alluded to in the conclusion of *Jack the Modernist*. In my own encounter with the work of queer theorists, I have found the manner in which the notion of 'community' is articulated in many texts extremely problematic, in particular when it is mobilized alongside the word 'gay'. As far as the mass media are concerned, references to the "gay community" function more often than not to stabilize the heterosexual subject's illusion that gay men may somehow be empirically designated, and that we consitute a bounded, discrete sociological category vulnerable to the gaze of the dominant discourse. In short, the "gay community" functions for the dominant subject as an abjected category through which the illusory universality of heterosexuality is consolidated.

It is therefore an especially important task of queer theory to problematize this notion of 'community', to place it between immovable quotation marks, without at the same time sabotaging its potential usefulness in the context of oppositional cultural action. Of course, as we all know, the 'gay community' is a fiction: the married Republican/Reformer bank executive who stops at the baths to get his rocks off after work will never have a conversation with the activist at the community centre whose entire life is led in the context of a sophisticated urban gay culture saturated by 'alternative media' images and messages. Clearly, both these hypothetical representative subjects know little about the isolated, rural, proto-fag whose only experience of queer culture is of sex hotlines.

Glück's musings on the relation between the local/imaginary and the sublime/real may be useful here.

> The local is a necessary component of any community, and an allegorical poem can be local and at the same time claim or recover that other component of community life: the sublime. By local I mean: intimacy, the circumstance of knowing others and being known, being the subject of one's story, sharing gestures over a period of time, sharing ideology. By sublime I mean: transgression of ego boundaries, merging, transcendence, horror/awe, discontinuities of birth, sex, and death.[32]

The organization of a community is its organization of the relation between the registers of the local and the sublime or, in Lacanese, of the imaginary and the real. The local manifests itself in the figure who reads a community magazine, places himself within its context, imagines that he belongs to a group of men 'like him'. The sublime is of course more difficult to put into words: it is the intensity of orgasm behind the lilac trees, the antiseptic smell of the hospital room where my friend dies of AIDS. The local is the beginning of Bob's affair with Jack: the sensation of a lost object returned. The sublime is the bodily excess accessed by Bob during the lovemaking scenes: the piece of the body which separates off and "ascends."

The two categories of concern to both Glück and me may not be collapsed one into the other. There is no way of transforming the phantasy of 'gay men'

into a sociological reality, nor is there a means of encoding the sublime in such a manner which would 'bring us together'. There remains the register of language, of the symbolic. As Glück has written, "any fiction wants you to become it - wants to take the place of your reflection in the mirror and calls for your recognition."[33] Reading is this process through which the subject seeks the signifier which will designate its *manque-à-être*. The primordial lack in the subject is what drives it to seek its identity in language. The consequence is the primal importance of representation, of representation in language, and therefore the crucial proliferation of 'gay stories', of 'queer stories'.[34] These stories will function to offer the reading subject the signifiers which will 'reflect back' its experience, not in any adequate way, of course, but in a way which will constitute an alternative discourse to the one which presupposes the universality of heterosexuality.

As a 'gay man' or, more preferably, as a 'queer subject', I have no choice but to believe in the existence of my community, given the fact that there is no alternative or, more precisely, that the alternative inevitably recircumscribes my desire within the circuit of the other-sex object. Still, this belief is not one which need be dominating, which must necessarily drive me toward finding the non-existent proof of its existence. I may acknowledge the necessity of my phantasy of the 'gay community' without succumbing to the epistemological drive which seeks both the demonstration of its coherence and integration with its mythical networks. It is in language where this complex negotiation must take place: in a language which I imagine has emerged from 'my community.'

The notions of 'gayness' or 'leftness' will never be adequate designators of a politics which seeks to counter discursive heterosexualization. Both words depend upon an imaginary coherence which does not correspond to actuality. In the wider social field, the question of legal rights for 'homosexuals' is intricately related with other questions of concern to the 'progressive' camp, and therefore straddles the obscure area between the question of 'gay rights', and other questions of concern to feminists, visible minorities, workers and the poor. Of course, all of these concerns are of crucial importance in contemporary political debate. It remains to be said, however, that this is but one aspect of queer politics. Of crucial importance to those working in the fields of culture and representation are the questions of language and sexuality addressed in this chapter.

The danger of Jackson's valorization of imaginary intervention in the establishment of a gay male poetics is that he overlooks the most important characteristic of Lacan's imaginary register. Far from offering a space in which the human subject may acquire agency, the imaginary is the level upon which the subject's ego, the structure of his *méconnaissance* of bodily integrity, is formed, or more accurately, formalized. It is therefore a fundamentally paralyzing space of dyadic specularity which prevents the speaking subject from assuming a substantive oppositional agency by means of dialogue with other members of the community. As both Glück and Lacan so clearly show, the space in which

alternative, antihomophobic cultural intervention must take place is a fundamentally symbolic one: a space in which the manipulation of language may re-enact those fixating parental (or other) *imagos* and thereby allow the queer speaking subject access to the discursive influence required to create a new and better, more tolerant and open-ended, imaginary anchoring of the symbolic order.

I wonder, along with Glück, "if it's possible to be aware of the artifacted nature of the local and not be contemptuous of it? - to understand it as a construct and be moved by its depth?"[35]

In the meantime, as I attempt to deal with this unanswerable question, I write.

Notes

1 Robert Glück, *Jack the Modernist*, p. 125.

2 Robert Glück, "Truth's Mirror Is No Mirror," p. 45.

3 Earl Jackson, Jr. asserts that the most important works of the "New Narrative" have been Bruce Boone's *My Walk with Bob*; Kevin Killian's *Shy* and *Bedrooms Have Windows*; Dennis Cooper's *Safe*, *He Cried*, and *Closer*; and Dodie Bellamy's *Feminine Hygiene* and *The Letters of Mina Harker*. See Jackson's "Scandalous Subjects: Robert Glück's Embodied Narratives," p. 130.

4 Earl Jackson, Jr., "Scandalous Subjects: Robert Glück's Embodied Narratives," p. 119. Further references to this article shall be incorporated into the text.

5 Michèle Montrelay, who was a member of Lacan's *École freudienne* during the 1970s, was concerned during her career with, among other things, male sexuality and the 'masculine' imaginary. In the article "Appareillage," she relays her heterosexual male analysands' descriptions of ejaculation, stressing the extent to which the loss of semen is related in the male imaginary to the loss of ontological consistency, to the crumbling of the subject's being. In the context of Lacanianism, this paranoic affect should be linked with the status of Woman in the male imaginary as *pas-toute* (not-all), as that which threatens the universality of the masculine subject position: as, in sum, man's symptom. See Montrelay, "L'appareillage," pp. 33-43. On Woman as *pas-toute* in Lacan, see "Une lettre d'âmour," *Séminaire XX: Encore*, pp. 73-82.

Sander Gilman's analysis of the iconography of syphilis in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries describes the abjected relation established in the imaginary of the paranoic (heterosexual) male between the 'feminine' and the menace of disease. Jackson continues his evocation of the heterosexual male subject with a reference to the work of Klaus Theweleit, a renowned German sociologist, in which the subjectivity of the fascist male is characterized by the association of 'excessive' sexual pleasure with the 'Jewish threat', particularly that of Jewish women. See Gilman, "The Iconography of Disease;" and Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*.

6 As a means of introducing a gloss to these sketchy propositions *vis-à-vis* Jackson's work, I would like to quote a characteristic baroquely solipsistic passage in which one may find the symptoms to which my threefold argument refers. Jackson writes, "to bring [the] question back to subjectivity in [*sic*] a gay perspective, one must re-envision the heterosexual male's equation of ejaculation with a 'loss of self' according to a dialectic that arises beween two sexually involved men, a dialectic based on an intersubjective narcissism (an at least physiological empathy) in which self and other intermesh, and such that the ejaculation 'lost' is 'regained' in the partner, and vice-versa. Gay male lovemaking is a pulsation of inter-ruptions of subjectivity, of irruptions into the subject's somatic extension of his imaginary selfhood by the subject whose object he has ec-statically become. Subjectivity within male coupling is episodic, cognized and re-cognized as stroboscopic fluctuations of intense (yet dislocated, asymmetrical, decentred) awareness of self-as-other and self-for-other, via interlunations of psychic and sexual exuberance. If the heterosexual male imaginary includes a defense against ejaculation as loss of self, risk of non-meaning, gay male sexuality (with the anal drives restored) is a circulatory system of expenditure and absorption, of taking/giving and giving/taking."

Jackson is here offering what I wish to qualify as a utopian formulation of gay sex in which the 'beyond' of the pleasure principle has been overcome, in which the excess preventing complete specularity between self and other has been erased, and in which hermetic satisfaction and the perfect attainment of the object would preclude the possibility for future sexual encounters. In other words, what Jackson neologistically describes in this passage is death. Concordantly, the adoption of Jackson's model would render impossible the elucidation of instances in which sex between men 'goes wrong': for example, in cases of physical abuse between same-sex partners or gay rape. Jackson's evocation of the narcissistic recognition of the self by the other, of the perfect fusion between ideal egos, ignores the fundamental fact of egoic alienation, and therefore theorizes eroticism as that which consolidates, as opposed to disrupts, the subject's morphological identification. Consequently, by distinguishing between the subject's morphological body and the other *qua* ego, Jackson theorizes a meeting of two entities which are in fact one. In addition, by positing the 'difference' of gay

eroticism as narcissistic gratification resulting from physiological similarity, Jackson effectively cancels out the access of the male bisexual subject to his schema, unless one somehow posits that this subject's experience of same-sex eroticism will somehow be 'better' than the others. Finally, Jackson's notion of the 'gay male body' *qua* petrification of the structure of primary identification presupposes not only that we all have the same one, but that this structure is *consciously available* to the oppositional subject for strategic re-deployment. In sum, Jackson performs a monumental reification of the multiform, complex, and conflicted imaginary histories of the subjects whom he violently and presumptuously assembles under the rubric of his "gay male body." The quotation is from "Scandalous Subjects," p. 118.

7 Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics*, p. 155.

8 Silverman's more recent work in psychoanalytic theory may be characterized by a more critical position in relation to the sexual normativity implied by many accounts of the Freudian theory of the subject. In her most recent book, for example, she returns to Freud's texts on masochism to uncover the markedly ambivalent manner in which the young subject accomplishes its genderal identifications. In a particularly arresting passage, Silverman establishes in a reading of "A Child Is Being Beaten" that the normative 'positive' resolution of the Oedipus for the male subject rests upon a passive 'feminine' identification *vis-à-vis* the paternal *imago* predicated upon the desire to be anally penetrated by the father of the oedipal scenario. See "Masochism and Male Subjectivity," *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, pp. 185-213.

9 Robert Glück, *Jack the Modernist*, p. 15. Further references to this novel shall be incorporated into the text.

10 *Le corps propre* is an expression used by Julia Kristeva to distinguish between bodily processes incorporated by identification, and the "abjected" secretions of excrement, urine, and vomit which are jettisoned from the object relation. Kristeva regards defilement rituals in 'primitive' societies as a means of negotiating the abjected body into "scription," thereby deferring (mass) psychosis. See Kristeva, "De la saleté à la souillure," *Pouvoirs de l'horreur: Essai sur l'abjection*, pp.69-106.

11 Slavoj Zizek explains the Lacanian notion of surplus enjoyment, and its implicit relation to the Marxian notion of surplus value, in *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*, pp. 166-167. Further references are incorporated into the text.

12 Lacan expounds upon the relation between *jouissance*, being, and the One (*Y a d' l'Un*) in "De la jouissance": "On ne parle que de ça depuis longtemps, de l'Un. *Y a d' l'Un*, c'est de cet énoncé que j'ai supporté mon discours de l'année dernière, et certes pas pour confluer dans cette confusion originelle, car le désir ne nous conduit qu'à la visée de la faille où se démontre que l'Un ne tient que de l'essence du signifiant. Si j'ai interrogé Frege au départ, c'est pour tenter de démontrer la béance qu'il y a de cet Un à quelque chose qui tient à l'être, et, derrière l'être, à la jouissance." See *Séminaire XX: Encore*, p. 12. The importance of this quotation in the present context lies in the manner in which the One establishes the subject's non-identity with itself. In order to cover over the void of the subject (the Fregean zero), the object relation is established, thereby effectuating the exteriority of self-consciousness. We can thus see the simultaneous fascination and repulsion exerted by Jack *qua objet petit a*; he at once subjectivizes the narrator by incorporating him into a chain of meaning, yet he also reminds the narrator of the 'ex-timacy' of his 'self', of the fact that he may only be conscious of himself through the intermediary of an exterior object.

13 Robert Glück, *Jack the Modernist*, p. 28. Further references to the novel are incorporated into the text.

14 *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary*, p.319.

15 It is precisely this relation between penis and phallus which has been so controversial in recent feminist theory. The penis/phallus question will be one of the issues discussed at length in the following chapter. For more on the phallus, see "The Phallus Issue" of *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*.

16 I refer to sexual difference here not in terms of Freud's "anatomical distinction between the sexes," but in relation to the subject's notion that it is not identical to itself. More precisely, I am alluding, in a Lacanian kind of way, to sexual difference *qua* figure for difference *tout court*, that is to say for both the subject's exteriorized self-consciousness and for the incompleteness of the symbolic landscape. Thus, the subject's consciousness of difference is in this context related to the sexual in a manner that does not require the presence of a member of the other sex; in other words, the object relation does not need to be heterosexual in order for there to be cognizance of difference.

17 Robert Glück, *Jack the Modernist*, p. 30.

[18] The term "aggressivity" is a neologism coined by the English translator of the *Écrits*, Alan Sheridan, to refer to Lacan's notion of "*agressivité*." See Lacan, "L'agressivité en psychanalyse," *Écrits*, p. 101.

[19] I wish to comment here on my use of Montrelay's work with female analysands (or, more accurately, with 'feminine' identified ones) to illuminate a text evoking 'gay' male subjectivity. Although I do not mean to establish an essential relation between the 'gay' male subject and the 'feminine' relation to the phallus of concern to Montrelay, I do in fact wish to underline the significance of the existence of similar subjective structures in Montrelayan 'femininity' and Glück's text. One could perhaps offer a speculative link here between Montrelay's contention that 'femininity' is less subjected to the omnipotence of the law and Glück's evocation of nostalgia for the 'maternal' relation of *jouissance*. However, in no way do I wish, *à la* Jackson, to posit this similarity as an archetypal model, as an anchoring point, for something which has been called by others "gay subjectivity."

[20] Michèle Montrelay, "Inquiry into Femininity," p. 267.

[21] For Montrelay, the analytic cure is in fact constituted by sublimation: "we will call sublimated pleasure that which takes the same forms as incestuous pleasure [i.e. the prohibited pleasure of 'maternal' *jouissance*] while nonetheless presupposing and confirming woman's access to the symbolic. This pleasure is no longer derived from femininity as such, but from the signifier, more precisely, from the repression that brings this about: this is why sublimated pleasure is identified with the pleasure derived from the joke." See Montrelay, "Inquiry into Femininity," p. 269.

[22] Jacques Lacan, "The mirror stage," *Écrits: A Selection*, p. 5.

[23] Slavoj Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 169.

[24] Slavoj Zizek, *Looking Awry*, p. 19.

[25] Robert Glück, "Truth's Mirror Is No Mirror," p.41.

[26] Jacques Lacan, "Aggressivity in psychoanalysis," *Écrits: A Selection*, p. 8. The next reference is incorporated into the text.

27 The Freud quotation is from *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 119. Boothby's discourse on the death instinct is quoted from *Death and Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*, pp. 40-41.

28 Robert Glück, *Jack the Modernist*, p. 25.

29 Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 282.

30 I also want to draw attention to the 'political' implications of this "analysis-without-an-analyst." As this entire chapter has tried to show, the parallels between *Jack the Modernist qua* (possibly) semi-autobiographical fiction and Lacanianism *qua* analytic technique are uncanny. Consequently, it seems possible to suggest that the liberatory effects of analysis may be accessed outside the analytic chamber by means of the writing of literature. In other words, the insights of Lacanianism (and psychoanalysis in general) do not remain confined to the bourgeois-capitalist institutionalization of psychoanalytic practice, but may at least partially be derived by the individual from artistic practice without the intervention of an analyst. In this sense, one supposes, the writer's imagined addressee would stand in for the analyst *qua* other, and the constraints of genre and the rules of grammar and syntax (or language, *tout court*) would function as the analyst *qua* Other.

31 I do not wish to infer here an unproblematized identity between Robert Glück and the narrator Bob; this would cast the unfashionable glean of psychobiography to my analysis, and would otherwise require further theoretical justification. One nevertheless has to admit that it is precisely in this direction that Glück's choice of name for his narrator leads. By this I do not naïvely mean that Bob *is* Robert Glück, but that Glück may in all likelihood wish to encourage the reader's imaginary association of Bob *qua* novelistic narrator with Glück *qua* fictional enunciator.

32 Robert Glück, "Allegory," p. 112.

33 Robert Glück, "My Community," p. 122.

34 In his article "Caricature," Robert Glück refers to the manner in which a community makes sense of itself as "narration." In oppressed/oppositional communities, the modes of narration which are most often effective in the subversion of dominant codes are satire and caricature. Through an analysis of specific examples of the caricatural and satirical modes, Glück theorizes the

technique of "text-metatext" as the most effective mode of narration for an oppositional community. This technique subtends a politics of (symbolic) narration sutured to an (imaginary) conception of the community, coupled with a metatextual commentary which would provide "a running deconstruction, or analysis, its point of view based on the future, or a real community" (28). Although Glück conceptualizes the metatextual register of this strategy as one which functions principally to evaluate the effectiveness of the narration from the point of view of the projected needs of the community, I would rather qualify the metatextual as a subtextual agency which more radically questions the coherence and desirability of the notion of the "real community" in the first place. In this manner, the self-reflexive aspect of the oppositional text would be political not in the sense of an evaluation of progressive efficacy, but in the context of a radical questioning of exactly whom is represented by the very terms of the discursive mobilization of this "evaluation" itself. See Glück, "Caricature," p. 28.

35 Robert Glück, "Truth's Mirror," p. 45.

3. The *Sublime Object* of Gender

> The antagonistic tension which defines sexuality is not the polar opposition of two cosmic forces (yin-yang, etc.), but a certain crack which prevents us from even consistently imagining the universe as a Whole. Sexuality points toward the supreme ontological scandal of the nonexistence of the universe.[1]
>
> - Slavoj Zizek

After the collapse of communist *régimes* in Eastern Europe beginning in the latter half of the 1980s, intellectuals on the left have been forced to rethink the teleological historicism and utopianism of the Marxian tradition in an effort to come to terms with the apparent 'impossibility' of the (classically) socialist state. In a similar manner, at least to the extent to which one pays attention to the rhetoric of gender in the mass media, the notions of masculinity and femininity are presently at a contiguous point of crisis. With the emergence of the 'men's movement', the so-called 'postfeminist' age, lipstick lesbians, and the gay-macho gym body, the reconfiguration of gender paradigms following the period of 'sexual liberation' of the 1960s seems to be falling back upon itself.

Contemporary theorists of gender and society have once again been confronted with what has been termed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe the constitutive "antagonism" of the socius,[2] the fact that any account of the sexual or political field which attempts to 'suture' the structural 'crack' at the center of the symbolic network inevitably collapses into the ground upon which ideological coherence and self-identity were originally hallucinated. In other words, the communist dream of a utopian, classless society and the early feminist dream of sexual relations devoid of conflict have been repeatedly shown to be impossible, unrealizable phantasms.[3] As is demonstrated by the agenda of what is known as 'post-feminism', the ideologies of gender which were the target of so much feminist work in the 1970s have proven to be not only much more resistant to attack than originally anticipated, but perhaps even indestructible.

In response to this new realization, theorists of various persuasions and concerns have set to work to come to terms with this "constitutive antagonism," and to determine what exactly may be done in the interests of 'progressive' social change in the wake of the dawning of a postutopianist intellectual epoch. Drawing upon the postmarxist work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, self-described theorists of the "New Left," Slavoj Zizek has inaugurated a school of thought in his native Slovenia which refers to the later teaching of Jacques Lacan in order to innovate a wide range of fields including legal, film, and social theory; epistemology, literature, and politics.

Until very recently, however, with the exception of a handful of asides to be found here and there on the questions of the *femme fatale* and the maternal superego in Hitchcock, for example, as well as on comments related to the Lacanian notion of Woman as *pas-toute*, Zizek's work has featured a conspicuous lack of speculation related to the ramifications of Lacanianism upon the question of gender.[4] The aim (or perhaps more accurately the desire) of this chapter will therefore be to begin to speculate upon what kinds of things begin to happen when Zizek's "sublime object" is viewed not, strictly speaking, in relation to ideology, but in relation to gender or, better, in relation to the *ideology* of gender. Elaborating upon both Zizek's seminal work *The Sublime Object of Ideology* and the more recent *Tarrying with the Negative*, I will attempt to navigate the discursive intersection between later Lacanianism and feminism, between the Zizekian text and queer theory. My ultimate goal in this chapter will be to evaluate the potential contribution of Lacan/Zizek to a queer- feminist cultural-political project. More specifically, I shall attempt to refine speculation about what exactly psychoanalysis may provide critics and theorists working in the interests of feminism and anti-homophobic analysis. But first, a preliminary excursus on the question of psychoanalysis and feminism is required.

1. Idealizing Freud: Butler's 'Deconstructive' Phenomenology

In this section I will take account of one particular aspect of the feminist work which has already been done both in relation to Zizek's texts and in relation to the later Lacan. For this reason, this initial section will attempt to deal with the work of Judith Butler on psychoanalytic theory. I have chosen the work of Judith Butler as an example, an example of examples, really, of the kind of feminist appropriations of Lacan which I find extremely problematic both from a theoretical perspective and from the point of view of the agenda of queer-feminism. As I sought to bring out in the work of Earl Jackson, Jr. in the previous chaper, there is a tendency among feminist/ queer appropriators of Lacan to overestimate both the importance of the imaginary register and the extent of Lacan's phallo/ andro/ heterocentrism. A similar tendency is at issue in the most recent work of Judith Butler.

In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler tries to formulate a genealogy of the materiality of the body in Western discourse and thereby critically examine the discursive processes through which the materiality of the body comes to signify in language. In relation to psychoanalytic theory more specifically, Butler reads classic Freudian and Lacanian texts in an effort to determine in what manner psychoanalysis first theorizes the materiality of the body, and in so doing then normalizes certain bodily morphologies as constitutive of hegemonic gendered and sexed positions. At all moments concerned with the question of how power constitutes bodies as discursively possible, as linguistically utterable, the reader is shown how language is indelibly marked by the imprint of an androcentric and

heterosexist imperative which institutes a proper domain of sex that exercises a regulatory power over which kinds of bodies come to "matter" at all.

The purpose of the following will be to take a closer look at one of the essays in Butler's book, "The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary," in order to begin to work toward two goals. The first of these will be to determine the distortions of psychoanalysis brought on by Butler's strategic readings of psychoanalytic texts; in this phase I will be concerned with questions such as the following. What is the nature and purpose of her 'return to Lacan'? What unstated presuppositions lead her to view Lacanianism through the distorting frame of an alleged antifeminism? Why is psychoanalysis in general viewed throughout Butler's work as containing an *a priori* structural bias toward the male subject? And, most importantly, why and in what manner must Butler perform at crucial moments of her analysis a crude reduction of Lacan's theorization of the phallus in order to ground her qualification of Lacanian theory as a form of "heterosexist structuralism"?[5]

The second goal of my reading of Butler will be to determine exactly what are the limitations of Butler's "lesbian phallus" in relation to its potential use as a (psychoanalytically) deconstructive weapon to be mounted against masculinist phallic identification and discursive androcentrism. To what extent is Butler's "lesbian phallus" 'allowed' by Lacanian psychoanalytic theory? What destabilizing effect, if any, will the "lesbian phallus" have upon the continuing reception and implicitly political assimilation of Lacan's daunting psychoanalytic legacy? To put this more succinctly, I will move toward an evaluation of Butler's "lesbian phallus" in relation to the strategy of an oppositional psychoanalysis which finds in Lacan's theorization of the subject valuable devices to be mobilized against the hold of the androcentric and heterosexist dominant discourse upon the manner in which subjects are formed by, in, and through language.

Butler begins her analysis by returning to Freud's metapsychological paper *On Narcissism: An Introduction* (1914). This return to Freud is meant to establish what Butler evidently considers to be the very useful theorization of the relation of the subject to its body as it is elaborated by Freudian psychoanalysis. For Butler's Freud, the importance of the theory of narcissism lies in the notion of the indissolubility between body and psyche made manifest in the subject's relation to sensations of pain, as well as in the erotogenic delineation of body parts effected by these sensations. In Butler's reading of Freud, the erotogenization of bodily organs, in fact the entire process by which the body assumes psychic representation, is indistinguishable from the subject's access to its 'real', anatomical bodily specificity.

In other words, there is no body before the ideational representative[6] of the body; there is no psychic representation of the body before bodily activity, bodily sensation, bodily phenomena. Butler sums up her view of the ramifications of Freud's thoughts on narcissism: "If erotogenicity is produced through the conveying of a bodily activity through an idea, then the idea and the conveying are

phenomenologically coincident. As a result, it would not be possible to speak about a body part that precedes and gives rise to an idea, for it is the idea that emerges simultaneously with the phenomenologically accessible body, indeed, that guarantees its accessibility" (59).

One encounters here straight away the confusion provoked by Butler's translation of psychoanalysis into the vocabulary of German idealism. First, *On Narcissism* is not a text concerned primarily with the problem of the relation between the anatomical body and its psychic representation; it instead manifests Freud's ambivalent concern with the distinction between ego-libido (the narcissistic libido) and object-libido, notions which eventually develop into the life and death 'instincts'.[7] Despite the misleading focus of Butler's reading, Freud's discussion of erotogenicity in this paper does not lead to a grand philosophical statement regarding the supposed phenomenological coincedence of organ sensation and the psychic representation of this sensation. Second, when Butler refers to "the idealization" which "produces erotogenicity" (62) for the subject, she ignores the manner in which this vocabulary is contextualized in psychoanalytic theory. When Freud in fact does speak of idealization in *On Narcissism*, he refers not to the psychical representation of bodily phenomena, but instead to the relation of the subject to the ego ideal *qua* object in the context of libidinal overvaluation. In the object relation, the desired object assumes an aura of perfection and invulnerability, and in this manner becomes "idealized" in the subject's phantasy.[8] Idealization in psychoanalysis does not refer to the psychic representation of bodily organs, but rather to the phantasmatic character of the object in the subject's relation to its *Ideal-Ich*.

If Butler were more familiar with the vocabulary of psychoanalysis, she would recognize that her usage of the terms "idea" and "idealization" in her analysis function to distort her treatment of the Freudian texts of concern to her. In *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, Laplanche and Pontalis stress the extent to which Freud modifies the meaning of the term "idea" from that assumed in the context of the German philosophical tradition. Whereas "*Vorstellung*" in idealist philosophy designates the subject's apprehension of the object in an act of consciousness, Freud made it perfectly clear that the "*Vorstellung*" *qua* representative of the somatic instinct remains in the unconscious of the subject. Registered in the "mnemic systems," the ideational representative of the instinct (the "*Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*") is in fact what constitutes the unconscious as such. It is for this reason that subsequent psychoanalytic theorists, in particular Lacan, have drawn attention to the uncanny parallel between the function of the "*Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*" in the unconscious and the Saussurean signifier.[9]

Basing herself upon this muddled translation of Freudian vocabulary, Butler goes on to read the text on narcissism 'deconstructively' in order to argue that Freud posits the inherent transferability of erotogenicity between organs, while at the same time reifying this transferability by positing the male genitals as the example of examples, or the prototype, of the process of bodily investment.

Butler's reading of Freud claims to demonstrate the privileged function attributed to the male genitals in the subject's epistemic relation to the object. Insofar as the subject's apprehension of the world is circumscribed by its imaginary "idealization" of the body, a process which synecdochally privileges certain body parts over others, Freud's text implicitly establishes the penis as the anatomical origin of all possible bodily projections.

On Butler's view, psychoanalysis claims that insofar as psychic bodily representation is a necessary precondition for the subject's relation to the world, the translation of body parts to the level of the psychical which structures this representation is by nature contingent. Butler argues that the paradox of Freud's theory lies in the fact that the hegemony of the male genital form contradicts the imaginary contingency of the narcissistic relation through a process of reification by which the penis is established as that organ which lies at the origin of all possible bodily investments. As we shall soon see, Butler sees this same process of reification, this same blockage of organ transferability, at work in Lacan's text. However, Butler's phenomenalization of Freudian theory places her claim for Freud's phallocentrism on shaky ground, and renders problematic her claim for the primacy of the anatomical penis in the narcissistic relation. Nevertheless, given the Lacanian focus of my analysis, and despite the fact that Butler's claims about Freud could be quite easily contested, I shall be arguing that in the case of Lacan, the (ambivalent) operation of masculinist privilege is more difficult to establish than in the case of Freud, and that Butler's confusion regarding the function of the phallic signifier leads to a distortion of the Lacanian position.

As a last note on Butler's reading of Freud, however, I would suggest that not only does Butler read the text *On Narcissism* for a delineation of the somatic-psychic relation which would be better found elsewhere, but she also overstresses the extent to which Freud privileges the male anatomy in the formation of the "morphological imaginary." Of course, Butler rightly chastizes Freud for imagining the penis as the prototypical genital at one point of his analysis, but she seems to underestimate the fact that Freud also refers in the same paragraph to "the genitals" in a way which does not necessarily exclude the clitoris. At any rate, Freud does eventually affirm that erotogenicity is "a general characteristic of all organs."[10] Above and beyond the debatable and probably undecidable question which seeks to know the extent of Freud's phallocentrism, it remains to be said that the central concern of the passages 'deconstructed' by Butler relates not to the psychic representation of bodily organs, but to the effect of changes in the erotogencity of these organs to "the balance of libidinal cathexis in the ego" (77).

2. *Is the Phallus (a) Lesbian?*

Butler's clumsy reading of Freud is cast in her argument in order to lead up to Lacan's elaboration of the subject's constitution of the bodily ego. The point is that Freud's alleged wavering between the simultaneous and paradoxical positing

of the penis as example and origin for the synecdochal formation of the morphological imaginary is paralleled in a similarly ambivalent attitude toward the phallic relation in the work of Lacan. In the following passage, Butler hopes to address what she views to be Lacan's establishment of a "heterosexual matrix" through his covert privileging of the 'masculine' subject's relation to the phallus. She therefore implies a fundamental misreading of Lacan in which the phallic relation and the law of castration are viewed as symbolically privileging the 'masculine' subject.

> To insist [...] on the transferability of the phallus, the phallus as transferable or plastic property, is to destabilize the distinction between being and having the phallus, and to suggest that a logic of non-contradiction does not necessarily hold between those two positions. In effect, the "having" is a symbolic position which, for Lacan, institutes the masculine position within a heterosexual matrix, and which presumes an idealized relation of property which is then only partially and vainly approximated by those marked masculine beings who vainly and partially occupy that position within language. But if this attribution of property is itself imporperly attributed, if it rests on a denial of that property's transferability (i.e., if this is a transfer into a non-transferable site or a site which occasions other transfers, but which is itself not transferred from anywhere), then the repression of that denial will constitute that system internally and, therefore, pose as the promising spectre of its destabilization. (62-63)

Butler is here laying the foundation for her subsequent argument by positing the following notion. Psychoanalysis is useful to, and recuperable by, an oppositional feminist and antihomophobic politics as long as its "constitutive" androcentrism is deactivated by the kind of 'deconstructive' reading Butler suggests.

However, Butler's development of the "limitations" of psychoanalysis depends not only upon a misreading of Freud, but upon a distortion of the Lacanian view of gender as well. In the above quotation, Butler misrecognizes the masculine gender as a "symbolic position" "which presumes an idealized relation of property" to the phallus. Clearly, Butler is here conflating the interrelated but nevertheless conceptually distinct registers of the symbolic and the imaginary. As I will develop further below, gender is marked most profoundly by the imaginary relation the subject adopts *vis-à-vis* the phallus, and the "symbolic position" which for Butler is constitutive of 'masculinity' will be revealed to be much more precarious than she believes. In addition, in no way does the genderal logic of being/ having the phallus constitute a "heterosexual matrix." As I will show, any "matrix" posited by the gender relation of two subjects of whatever gendered position may never add up to a coherent discursive formation which imposes a normative standard upon all others. In effect, there may never be a sexual relation

of any sort which may be adequately signified by language, nor will the sexual relation in any incarnation structure a coherent, happy whole reminiscent of what, as I have shown, Lacan has termed the ideal of "genital love."

Butler is entirely incorrect when she claims that it is possible to trace the means by which Lacan's text denies the inherent instability of the sexed positions implicit in the theorization of the phallus. Because of the phantasmatic, and therefore contingent, character of the subject's assumption of its relation to the phallus, gender identification relies upon an unending process of reiteration by which the illusion of gender identity, the phantasy of the subject's atemporal gendered position in language, is maintained. Since the discourse of gender has no ontological basis in terms of the *symbolic* register, but instead derives its authority from the repetition of phantasmatic identification, it is possible to posit subversive repetitions which unveil the fundamental inadequacy of the subject's speech in relation to what Lacan refers to as the "ideal type" of its sex. This is Butler's argument against Lacan; as I will show below, however, this is precisely what Lacan suggests through the formulae of sexuation. In fact, it is not even necessary to *posit* subversive repetitions, given that the subject is required to repeat the formation of its narcissistic relation in order to maintain the illusion of gender coherence. In other words, psychoanalysis has *already posited* the necessity of compulsive repetition.

One of the aspects of Butler's argument for Lacan's phallocentrism therefore hinges on the contention that it is the symbolic register which consolidates the subject's imaginary morphological identification. Because Lacan emblematizes the symbolic register with the notion of the *nom-du-père*, Butler assumes the Lacanian symbolic to be inherently patriarchal. It is only when the subject is attributed with a name, a name which by definition positions the subject within the domain of kinship relations and the prohibition of the incest taboo, that the totalized image of the body is formalized and reinforced. In this manner, Butler interprets the Lacanian symbolic as an ahistorical and semantically fixed differential network based upon exogamous patriarchal kinship relations, one which is fully coherent and capable of signifying adequately the subject's experience of gender and sexuality. On this view, the symbolic network works in tandem, consolidates the phantasmatic structure of the subject's bodily identification. Hence, the relation established here by Butler between the imaginary and symbolic registers in Lacanianism is one of complementarity; like the supposedly fully-functioning "heterosexual matrix," Butler argues that the positioning of the subject in the symbolic confirms the subject's identification with the ideal type of its sex, and it is in fact only at the moment when the subject assumes its position in language that its phantasy of bodily mastery assumes its immutable character.

Butler's characterization of the Lacanian symbolic radically simplifies, however, the complex and conflicted relationship established by Lacan between the imaginary and symbolic registers. Lacanian psychoanalysis is a dialectical

psychoanalysis, not in the Hegelian idealistic sense which subtends the synthesizability of antagonistic theses, but in a sense which conceptualizes a neverending tension between the stability and fixity of the subject's egoic identification and the exclusively differential, negative, and incomplete character of the symbolic network.[11] Butler's analysis does not take into consideration the radical discontinuity and indissolubility of the imaginary and the symbolic, nor does it acknowledge the incompleteness of the orders (they are not One). As Lacan stresses in "Ronds de ficelle," the three Lacanian orders must be conceptualized simultaneously as radically interdependent; as soon as one is left out of the equation, the entire system breaks down.[12] Above and beyond Butler's miscomprehension of the symbolic as patriarchally coherent, she would also be required to account for the absence in her discussion of the real. Although, as I shall discuss below, Butler takes on the question of the real in her chapter on Zizek, her conceptualization of this register leaves much to be desired. In addition, the absence of the real in "The Lesbian Phallus" promulgates an oversimplification of the Lacanian dialectic in which one aspect of the triad of registers is entirely left out and the other two reduced to a Hegelian "synthesis."[13]

Butler offers her reader as reference for her claim that the symbolic confirms the narcissistic relation Lacan's discussion in *Séminaire II* of the relation between the word and the object. Butler claims that "bodies only become whole, i.e., totalities, by the idealizing and totalizing specular image which is sustained through time by the sexually marked name" (72). In effect, Lacan does make this connection. The object of the narcissistic relation, in its unified fixity, appears to the subject as permanent, as belonging outside the realm of the temporal. Lacan's point is that it is the signifier which constitutes a pact between two subjects who agree to recognize the same object. Because this pact may be broken, in which case the object would no longer be sustainable, the object then takes on the character of precariousnes , of finitude. This is another way for Lacan to posit the differential character of the symbolic network; during the 'primal baptism', the signifier is sutured by collective agreement to the object, thereby constituting the object as the effect of the relation between two subjects.

In no way, however, does the emergence of the signifier reflect what Butler claims to be the essentially androcentric character of the symbolic. Logically, Butler's argument only makes sense to the extent to which one accepts Lacan's use of noninclusive language as a nuanced and complex theoretical statement about the immutability of patriarchy. This, of course, would be foolish. There would perhaps be a limited amount of merit in taking Lacan to task for his use of the universal *l'homme*. However, I do not think that inclusive language was much of a concept in 1950s France, only a short time from the date French women obtained the right to vote in national elections; it seems ludicrous to base an argument for Lacan's phallocentrism on this virtually negligible point.

On the topic of the agency of the signifier in the 'primal baptism' of the object, Slavoj Zizek may provide much needed clarification. Distinguishing the

Lacanian theorization of signification from both Searlean descriptivism and Kripkean antidescriptivism, Zizek elucidates the function of the "rigid designator." The importance of this theory in the present context lies in the 'irrationality', the radically arbitrary and retroactive character of designation in the symbolic, in the big Other. What ensures the identity of the object despite the change in context, the evolution or progress by which the description of the object is subject to change, is precisely the signifier itself, the act of naming. The signifier designates "that surplus in the object which stays the same in all possible worlds [...], that is to say the Lacanian *objet petit a*."[14]

In other words, the signifier does not 'represent' a field of social relations viewed in the political sense. Butler's contention that the symbolic network somehow structurally enforces a "heterosexual matrix" which ensures that relations between subjects remain heterosexual, is therefore missing the point. If signifiers remain 'stuck' to the objects they designate through a kind of collective decision that has always already been made by someone else (the Other), this relation remains 'irrational' and neither reflects in any way a given essence of the socius, nor imposes unequal power relations between subjects. As I have already shown, patriarchy and androcentrism are instituted by strictly *imaginary* means; the symbolic big Other remains a stupid agency of naming from which signifiers are selected to be stuck to objects for no apparent reason other than a phantasmatic *a* which is simply the positivization of a void. In this sense, "compulsory heterosexuality" is not reflective of the essence of the symbolic network. It is precisely the task of analysis to bring to light the imaginary mechanisms through which the big Other is attributed with a false consistency.[15]

The fact remains that the Lacanian symbolic in no way sustains the subject's imaginary investment of bodily integrity. The Lacanian symbolic is a network entirely devoid of positive terms surrounding a constitutive "black hole," an abyss of nothingness, which exercises a fragmentary force against the rigid structurality of the subject's relation to the phallus.[16] In order to be convincing, Butler's argument would require here both a more researched reference to the Lacanian *corpus*, as well as a more nuanced reading of the subject's entry into language and the effects of this entry upon its imaginary gender. Clearly, Butler does not deal in her analysis with the irreducible, unsynthesizable dialectic tension between the imaginary and symbolic registers; a more careful reading of Lacan would instead show that the symbolic, without the effect of the subject's imaginary history, is by definition incapable of signifying bodily integrity, if for no other reason than because its constitution lacks the positive term necessary for the designation of any entity whatsoever, and because its illusion of coherence masks a primordial lack through which emerges the return of the real.[17]

What may be qualified without exaggeration as Butler's misrepresentation of Lacan is further aggravated by her contention that he specifically posits the male genitals as the primary organs which structure the narcissistic relation. Butler correctly establishes that for Lacan the subject's access to objects is

necessarily tainted by its bodily image. Insofar as the projected ego of the subject functions as a means of differentiation from the inchoate specularity of mirror stage dyadism, it serves as a generative frame through which objects of perception become phenomenologically accessible to the subject. Butler quotes from Lacan's seminar a passage which agrees with the Freudian notion of narcissism looked at moments ago. According to Lacan, "certains organes sont intéressés dans la relation narcissique, en tant qu'elle structure à la fois le rapport du moi à l'autre et la constitution du monde des objets."[18]

It must be noted that at no point in her argument does Butler provide evidence from Lacan which would indicate that the organs concerned in this passage must necessarily be the male genital ones. Yet, Butler rhetorically casts the rest of her argument as if the hegemony of the anatomical penis *had already been established*. "*If* these organs are the male genitals, they function as both the site and token of a specifically masculine narcissism" (77, my emphasis). Unfortunately, in no way does this part of Butler's argument hold water due to her failure to offer references to Lacan which point to the idea of penile privilege subtended by the subject's choice of organ during the formation of the narcissistic relation. I do not claim here to deny the instance of something which may in fact work at certain moments of the Lacanian text as masculine anatomical hegemony resulting from Lacan's own unconscious desire. I instead would insist that Butler does not provide the evidence required to lead to such a conclusion, a conclusion upon which the subsequent entirety of her article is based. And, of course, neither does Butler come to terms with the fundamental tenets of Lacanianism which provide the tools for the psychoanalytic 'deconstruction' of the phantasies of gender, tools which would at any rate neutralize the residual traces of Lacan's desire.

I want to suggest here a possible explanation for Butler's confusion about the function of the phallic signifier in the symbolic register. It is first necessary, however, to treat Butler's argument against Lacan's contention that the phallus is not an imaginary effect. Butler gives away in this section of her argument what I want to qualify as a muddled conflation of the function, or effect, of the phallic signifier, and the 'status', or ontology, of the phallus. Butler claims that Lacan is contradicting himself when he says that the phallus *is* not an imaginary effect while at the same time insisting that the phallus *has an effect upon* the imaginary of the subject. Butler argues: "By entering into [the] narcissistic relation, the organs [chosen by the subject as synecdochal figures of bodily integrity] cease to be organs and become imaginary effects. One might be tempted to argue that in the course of being set into play by the narcissistic imaginary, the penis becomes the phallus. And yet, curiously and significantly, in Lacan's essay on 'The Signification [Meaning] of the Phallus', he will deny that the phallus is either an organ or an imaginary effect; it is instead a 'privileged signifier'" (151).

Two crucial points must be made at this juncture. First, Butler presupposes here that the organs in question are the real, anatomical ones,

conceptualized independently of their psychic representation. Yet, the entire first section of Butler's paper argued that, for the psychoanalytically conceived subject, psyche and body are indissoluble. In other words, when Lacan says that "certain organs are caught up in the narcissistic relation," by the very terms of Butler's argument it is impossible that Lacan intended to signify here a body part ontologically and phenomenologically independent from the subject's imaginary. Precisely because the organs in Lacan's text enter into the narcissistic relation, these organs are necessarily and always already represented in the structure of the phantasy. Hence, the qualification of these organs as imaginary becomes redundant. If the psychic idea of the body part and the activity of the body part itself are phenomenologically coincident, as Butler insists, it is no longer possible to refer in a psychoanalytic argument to the body part as belonging to the anatomical body. Thus, it is not the penis which becomes the phallus in the anthromorphic identification, but instead the male subject's *phantasmatic representation of its genital organ* which is attributed the illusion of phallic privilege, a privilege reinforced by a phallocentric cultural imaginary.

Second, if the phallic signifier *is* not an imaginary effect, but rather a signifier in the field of the Other as Lacan contends (the signifier to which there may never be a signified),[19] it does not follow that to posit this signifier's imaginary *effects* is contradictory. Lacan's theorization of the phallus implies that the phallus, insofar as it is a signifier belonging to the register of the symbolic, is not a term, entity, or meaning, but rather one element in an unhypostatizable differential relation without positive terms. The phallus must be veiled by the subject's phantasy in order to properly signify precisely because there is nothing there to be signified. In other words, as indicated earlier, the signified of the phallic signifier, insofar as this oxymoronical formulation makes sense, is precisely the lack of a signifier at the centre of the Other.

Lacan's elaboration of the notion of ~~*La*~~ *femme*, of Woman *qua* barred subject, may be used to illustrate this point. In his *Séminaire XX*, Lacan attempted to theorize that which continually eluded Freud during his lifetime, namely, feminine sexuality, or the question *Was will das Weib?* (what does the Woman want?). In "Dieu et la jouissance de ~~La~~ femme," Lacan draws a distinction between the signifiers *La* and *la*, the former being disallowed by the 'feminine' relation to the phallus. In contradistinction to the 'masculine' indentification, whose signifier illusorily presupposes the universality of the masculine set, *la femme* identifies rather with the lack, with that which figures as the spectre that haunts the 'universal' phallic function. In other words, the truth of *la femme* illustrates my contention that the phallic signifier has no signified. About the non-capitalized definite article, Lacan states: "ce *la* est un signifiant dont le propre est qu'il est le seul qui ne peut rien signifier, et seulement de fonder le statut de *la* femme dans ceci qu'elle n'est pas toute. Ce qui nous permet pas de parler de *La* femme."[20] In other words, *la femme* posits 'the truth of the signifier', insofar as s/he reveals to the 'masculine' subject that the phallic function *qua* phantasy of

universality does not work.[21] Whereas the masculine formula of sexuation is predicated precisely upon the notion that the phallus does indeed signify, *la femme* reveals the radical limitation of phallic signification: there will forever be the sphere of the *pas-toute* which the phallic signifier under the sign of 'masculinity' will never be able to represent.[22]

Insofar as the signification of the phallus requires the presence of the phantasmatic structure, the subject has nevertheless always already formed such a phantasy and, hence, has always already attributed to the phallus an imaginary meaning, or signified. It is precisely in this imaginary relation of the subject to the phallus that the subject's identification with the "ideal type" of its sex is constituted. Again, to perform my own compulsive reiteration, the structure of gender is phantasmatic: Lacan's formulae of sexuation do not designate rigid subject positions in the symbolic, but instead posit the irreducibility of these positions from the imaginary construct they establish in relation to the phallic signifier, a construct jeopardized by both the subject's manipulation of discourse and, as I shall soon discuss, the return of the real. It follows that when Butler contends that Lacan's refusal to accept that the phallus is an imaginary effect functions as a denial in the analytical sense (so that the phallus in fact would be an imaginary effect), she is in fact performing her own denial that Lacan's alleged structuralism may not in fact be as androcentric as presupposed. In fact, it may be argued that Butler's article is rhetorically deployed not to decide upon the question of Lacan's noxious androcentrism, but instead to 'prove' that he is already androcentric, as if Lacan's 'guilt' on the charge of patriarchal "heterosexist structuralism" had already been unambiguously established.

3. "I Need my Phallus"

In "La signification du phallus / Die Bedeutung des Phallus," Lacan claims that clinical experience demonstrates "une relation du sujet au phallus qui s'établit sans égard à la différence anatomique des sexes et qui est de ce fait d'une interprétation spécialement épineuse chez la femme et par rapport à la femme."[23] Lacan's detractors pounce upon the apparent contradiction here: how is it possible to establish gradations of difficulty, of intractability, in relation to gender if sexual difference has no bearing whatever upon the subject's relation to the phallus? If anatomical difference does not enter into the psychoanalytic equation, on what basis does Lacan posit the existence of *la femme*? This *méconnaissance* of Lacan is the same one which constitutes Butler's confusion.

If anatomy is not at issue in the subject's relation to the phallus, then it is the projection of the form of the cultural imaginary's "ideal type" of the subject's sex which constitutes sexual difference. Otherwise, anatomical gender characteristics having already been ruled out, there would be no sexual difference at all, and it would be impossible to refer to something like "the case of the woman." When Lacanians refer to the subject's anatomy, they refer to its

imaginary form as represented by the *morphe* of the ego, and not to biological specificity. In psychoanalysis, sexual difference does not figure as such, that is to say as anatomical difference; it figures only in terms of the subject's necessary identification with the phantasmatic ideal of the prototypical male or female, an identification which is impossible to live up to consistently in the speech act, and which must therefore be indefinitely reiterated.

In *Séminaire XX*, Lacan underlines the extent to which the subject's positioning *vis-à-vis* the phallus has nothing to do with anatomical gender. It is for this reason that Lacan states that the phallic relation does not rule out the choice available to the subject to position itself in such a way as to contradict the supposed symmetry between anatomical sex and imaginary gender, that is to say to adopt the position of the phallic woman or the male homosexual.[24] In addition, no commentator that I know of has elaborated or speculated upon Lacan's own curious gender identifications. It becomes clear in *Séminaire XX*, for example, that Lacan situates his own discourse in the baroque tradition of catholic mysticism, in the works of such figures as St. John of the Cross, Hadewijch of Antwerp, and St. Teresa of Avila. Insofar as Lacan invokes a tradition of male mysticism placed on the 'feminine' side of the phallus, and insofar as he evokes the *jouissance* of Bernini's St. Teresa as that which his discourse is aiming to access, it must be said that, at least in this particular seminar, Lacan speaks from the precise position he claims to be evoking: that of *la femme*.[25] In other words, we have in the figure of Lacan himself an example of what we may call 'transgenderal identification': Lacan speaks to us from the position of the not-all, from the locus of the *inter-dit*.[26]

It is also in "La signification du phallus" that Lacan offers his closest approximation of a definition of the phallus.

> Le phallus est un signifiant, un signifiant dont la fonction, dans l'économie intrasubjective de l'analyse, soulève peut-être le voile de celle qu'il tenait dans les mystères. Car c'est le signifiant destiné à désigner dans leur ensemble les effets de signifié, en tant que le signifiant les conditionne par sa présence de signifiant.[27]

What this quotation underlines is the irreducible tension and indissociable interdependence of the imaginary and symbolic registers. In Lacan, there is no meaning in the symbolic. Signification is a process of imaginary fixation by which the negative differential flux of the symbolic is reified by the subject's phantasmatic investments.

This is precisely the difficulty of Lacan's notion of the phallus. The phallic signifier signifies nothing. It is only the subject's immanent imaginary relation to the phallus which attributes it with meaning. This imaginary relation to the phallus is inherently illusory yet unavoidably necessary. As Lacan insists, the phallus *qua* phallic signifier is not an imaginary effect, yet this imaginary effect is

immanent to the existence of the phallic signifier. In fact, the phallic signifier signifies only in the relation of the imaginary signified, or the narcissistic phantasy, which may also take on a collective dimension, as in the case of the patriarchal imaginary, for instance. The phallus only functions when veiled because it is functionless, meaningless, outside of the imaginary relation of the subject. In other words, the function of the phallic signifier is to cover over what Zizek refers to as the "black hole" in the real,[28] the inadequacy of the cultural symbolic. The phallus signifies only to the extent that the subject requires a 'belief' in the existence of a 'that which is out there' that will fill both its lack in being (*manque-à-être*) and cancel out the traumatic kernel at the heart of the Other.

I may now return to Butler's text in order to establish at exactly which point her reading of Lacan goes wrong.

> If the phallus in its symbolic function is neither an organ nor an imaginary effect, then it is not constructed through the imaginary, and maintains a status and integrity independent of it. [...] But if the phallus can be shown to be a synecdochal effect, if it both stands for the part, the organ, and is the imaginary transfiguration of that part into the centering and totalizing function of the body, then the phallus appears *as symbolic only to the extent that its construction through the transfigurative and specular mechanisms of the imaginary is denied*. (79)

The distinction I wish to make here between Butler's argument and my Lacanian one is subtle but substantial. It is not a question of whether the phallus is constructed *through* the imaginary (since the phallus *qua* phallic signifier has nothing to do with the imaginary), but of the subject's phantasmatic *relation* to the phallic signifier. In this sense, it would be possible to speak of gender as a symptom, as a fixed form present in the discourse of the subject which breaks up logical continuity. The symptom of gender would be precisely the subject's relation to the phallus, a relation which both logically and temporally precedes the speaking being, and which manifests itself during those inevitable moments in which discourse ceases to work.

In other words, Butler's conclusion is 'allowed' by Lacan himself. The difference I want to make here is that it is not Lacan who is upholding the imaginary relation of narcissism 'behind' the phallus, but rather the "specular mechanisms" of the patriarchal imaginary to which Butler refers, and more specifically the 'ideology of masculinity' which will be of concern in the following chapter. The phallus *qua* signifier is 'symbolic' to the extent to which the signifier belongs to the register of the symbolic. However, it must be maintained that in no way does this constitute a 'threat' to feminism or queer theory. The phallic signifier is a signifier without signified. As we shall later see, it is rather the *ideological object*, or the *object of gender*, which poses a 'real' but precarious threat to those subject positions ('feminine' and/or 'homosexual') which Butler views as

abjected by the institution of the law. It is precisely the positive 'nothing' within the object of gender designated by the phallic signifier which is at issue and which needs to be brought to light.

When Lacan states that the phallus is not an imaginary effect, he is not imposing the view that the phallic signifier remains independent of the subject's imaginary, and therefore acquires a transhistorical, transindividual status. He is instead insisting that it is the subject's relation to the phallus which is an imaginary effect, rather than the phallus itself. As a result of this miscomprehension, Butler thinks that she is arguing against a Lacanian position which is attempting to deny the inherent plasticity of the phallic relation, when in fact this is not the case. It is not the phallic signifier which is plastic, but instead the bodily idealization which positions the subject in relation to the phallus, and which attributes to this position the ideal, unrealizable characteristics of sex and gender.

> If the phallus is the privileged signifier of the symbolic, the delimiting and ordering principle of what can be signified, then this signifier gains its privilege through becoming an imaginary effect that pervasively denies its own status as both imaginary and an effect. If this is true of the signifier that delimits the domain of the signifiable within the symbolic, then it is true of all that is signified as the symbolic. In other words, what operates under the sign of the symbolic may be nothing other than precisely that set of imaginary effects which have become naturalized and reified as the law of signification. (79)

Butler is correct when she states that the phallic signifier gains privilege, influences the signifying chain, only by means of an imaginary effect. The phallic signifier, however, does not *become* this imaginary effect; it instead occasions it. Put another way, the phallic signifier covers over a traumatic void for which the subject must compensate by 'hallucinating' its gender. However, it is not the phallus *qua* phallic signifier which constitutes the gender of the subject, but rather its narcissistic relation to it. In other words, *gender ideologies are not connected in an essential way to the signifying network which makes up culture.* It is instead the very inadequacy of this network which inaugurates gender *qua* primordial difference consitutive of the unconscious. Regardless of Butler's misreading of Lacan on this important point, the fact remains that the imaginary relation is contingent, historical, and vulnerable to subversive repetitions and alternative mophological investments. If, for example, a male subject posits in his speech a proprietory relation to the phallus, and justifies this mastery of the significatory process by means of his anatomical specificity, his narcissistic relation will by its very formation cover up the phantasmatic character of the biological grounding.

However, the speech act of the 'masculine' subject himself will betray through the imaginary significatory effect the impossibility of such a mastery of

the field of the Other. The subject will therefore be required to reiterate his phallic identification in order to stave off the *unstoppable slide of the signifier* and, as I will later consider, the return of the real. In other words, the phallic identification of the 'masculine' gender may be undone precisely through the underlining of this subject's repetition automatism, of his/her obsessive need to fill in the lack which at all moments threatens to emerge from beneath the cover of the phallic signifier. Throughout this process, however, *contra* Butler, the phallic signifier does not *become* the structure of the subject's identification. The phallus remains in the symbolic order.

It is rather the subject's *phantasy of phallic mastery*, or the *phantasy* qua *phallic object*, which is at issue. This socio-cultural phantasy posits an androcentric control over the distribution of meaning in the language system and simultaneously performs, acts out, the very inadequacy of such a sense of control. Butler's conclusion is precisely Lacan's point: any signification is a reification. It follows that the formation of alternative imaginary morphologies is conceivable within the Lacanian sheme, although this is not the point which should be of concern. Rather, a more effective strategy for an anti-homophobic psychoanalysis would be to declare that the assumption of any subject position posited in relation to the phallus (that is to say all possible subject positions) is, because phantasmatic, inherently (psychoanalytically) 'deconstructible'. The phallus *qua* signifier is inaccessible to the subject outside of the symptomatic relations it has no choice but to establish in relation to it.

Butler sums up her argument thusly:

> Precisely because it is an idealization, one which nobody can adequately approximate, the phallus is a transferable phantasm, and its naturalized link to masculine morphology can be called into question through an aggressive reterritorialization. [...] It also means that there is not necessarily one imaginary schema for the bodily ego, and that cultural conflicts over the idealization and degradation of specific masculine and feminine morphologies will be played out at the site of the morphological imaginary in complex and conflicted ways. It may well be through a degradation of a feminine morphology, an imaginary and cathected degrading of the feminine, that the lesbian phallus comes into play, or it may be through a castrating occupation of that central masculine trope, fueled by the kind of defiance which seeks to overturn that very degradation of the feminine. (86-87)

In the Lacanian scheme, it is not possible to reiterate the phallic signifier in such a way that its 'meaning' would change. This is so precisely because the phallic signifier has no meaning. But insofar as an oppositional psychoanalysis would seek to form new imaginary relations to the phallus, or at least to deconstruct the old ones, the reiteration of the phallus is not necessary. It is not a question of

deprivileging the phallic signifier (because the phallic signifier is not symbolically privileged in the ideological sense), but of deprivileging the masculinist phantasy by which the phallus is attributed with an unmediated link to the male anatomy.

Butler goes astray in her argument when she qualifies the relation of phallus to penis in Lacanianism as an essential one. Lacan does not allow for any essential relation to the phallus whatever, regardless of the sex or gender identification of the subject concerned. In other words, Butler's lesbian phallic relation is no less tenuous than the patriarchal one; the value of the "lesbian phallus" lies rather in the denaturalizing force exerted by it upon androcentric culture. The Lacanian theorization of the phallus allows an oppositional feminist and antihomophobic psychoanalysis to declare the historical contingency of anthromorphic and heteromorphic bodily investments, while at the same time disallowing the formation of alternative imaginaries which would be capable of either transcending the formative effects of power and history or reifying the phallic relation as symbolically immanent. Insofar as it is entirely conceivable for Butler to posit her "lesbian phallus," the point is rather that the imaginary character of this construct may emerge as more difficult than it may originally seem. The narcissistic relation of the subject, and therefore gender identification, is unconscious, and therefore not accessible to the 'agency' of the human subject. This is yet another reason for queer theory to resist the lure of the imaginary.

Because there is nothing inherent in the Lacanian symbolic which constitutes it as patriarchal and androcentric, or which characterizes it in any manner whatever, it is of no concern to an oppositional cultural practice to concern itself with symbolic 'change'. Given that there is no fixed direction of signification in the symbolic order, it follows that the hegemony of anthromorphism is constituted strictly in terms of the narcissistic relation. The task of a queer psychoanalysis, or queeranalysis, is therefore less the creation of lesbian or other narcissistic relations ("what is needed is [...] the critical release of alternative imaginary schemas for constituting sites of erotogenic pleasure" [91]), but a more negative and 'deconstructive' one. By theorizing the inadequacy and performative self-destruction of the heteromasculinist phallic identification and, as we shall see in the next section, by underlining the destructive force of the return of the real, queeranalysis is in a privileged position to reveal the cracks in the discourse of patriarchy, and to assert the radical contingency and precariousness of any identity category whatever.

4. Castration and Ideology

In "Arguing with the Real," another chapter of *Bodies that Matter*, Judith Butler turns her attention to the work of Slavoj Zizek in an attempt to determine in what manner the latter's theorization of identity categories as phantasmatic may complement her own postessentialist reformulation of feminist and queer theory. While Butler clearly sees tremendous value in Zizek's work in *The Sublime*

Object of Ideology, she nonetheless voices vehement objection to what she perceives to be the problematic ahistoricism of the Lacanian real and the androcentric-heterosexist underpinnings of the law of castration. In the next few paragraphs I will be concerned with providing a reading of Butler's own reading of Zizek which will attempt to show at which points her critique of Zizek usefully counters his androcentrism and often ambivalent relationship to feminism.

In addition, however, I will also seek to show in what manner Butler misconceives certain fundamental Lacanian-Zizekian notions, in a way strikingly similar to her reading of Lacan on the phallus, and therefore presents a version of later Lacanian psychoanalysis which appears to be much more androcentrically and heterosexually rigid and prescriptive than it needs to be. As I will argue, Butler continues to mount critiques against Lacanian thought which are paradoxically 'allowed' by the theory. Thus, rather than dismantling the Lacanian edifice at its very foundations, Butler unwittingly reveals herself to be much more Lacanian than she appears consciously to admit. By reifying the complex relation established by Lacan between the real and the symbolic, Butler performs a parallel distortion of Lacanianism to that examined in the first section, and falls into the same trap of 'interpreting' the law of castration as does the phallic male subject.

Butler posits in the introductory queries of "Arguing with the Real" that part of her theoretical project lies in the interrogation of the "limitations of psychoanalysis." For Butler, these limitations are constituted by "invariant" "founding prohibitions" which impose "heterosexualizing injunctions" upon the subject (189). In order to remedy what she perceives to be psychoanalytic theory's structural normativity, Butler performs, as elsewhere in her work, a version of a 'deconstructive' critique of Lacan's notion of culture's inaugural law of castration. This critique is mobilized with the assistance of the Derridean notion of citationality, the idea that the utterance is performative and therefore 'constitutive', rather than 'descriptive', of 'reality'. Also applied in her theoretical project is Ernesto Laclau's and Chantal Mouffe's application of certain psychoanalytic notions to the development of the theory of radical democracy, an application viewed by Butler as less prescriptive than, presumably, that of the 'Lacanians'. For Butler, because the law of castration functions as the primal moment for the entirety of its theoretical system, psychoanalysis is irredeemably tainted, even in the later Lacan of concern to Zizek, by the stain of oedipal normativity and (patriarchal) phallocentrism.

For Butler, because the theorization of the subject in psychoanalysis depends at all moments upon the retroactive, mythical positing of castration as always already having happened, any appropriation of psychoanalysis by feminist or queer theory is marked from the word 'go' by the hegemonic advantage of the phallic male subject. Butler's project therefore consists in declaring the performative aspect of this primordial law. If psychoanalysis views the law as the "hard rock," the *a priori* moment, of the subject's presence in culture, this is only valid insofar as the law posits and performs its own inevitability in the very act of

its enunciation. On Butler's view, the function of the Lacanian law is to cover up at the precise moment when it goes into action the necessary, precarious, and compulsive citationality because of which it must be enunciated in the first place. In other words, if psychoanalysis views the law as originary, as the condition of possibility for 'reality' *as such*, Butler instead contends that it is precisely this always already, *a priori* character of the law upon which the structural androcentrism of psychoanalysis depends.

Part of the problem with Butler's reading of Zizek's Lacan lies in her conceptualization of the temporality of the subject's relation to the law. In order to offer theoretical support for her qualification of the law as ideological, Butler must invert the chronological primacy of the lack in relation to the introjection of the paternal metaphor.

> The "Law of the Father" induces trauma and foreclosure through the threat of castration, thereby producing the "lack" against which all symbolization occurs. And yet, this very symbolization of the law as the law of castration is not taken as a contingent ideological formulation. As the fixing of contingency in relation to the law of castration, the trauma and "substantial identity" of the real, Zizek's theory thus evacuates the "contingency" of its contingency. Indeed, his theory valorizes a "law" prior to all ideological formations, one with consequential social and political implications for the placing of the masculine within discourse and the symbolic, and the feminine as a "stain," "outside the circuit of discourse."[29]

Contrary to Butler's formulation here, the lack precedes the Law-of-the-Father, and is therefore in no way produced by it. The lack is in fact the subject *qua* "pure form of apperception,"[30] an empty frame through which the world may only be perceived when the narcissistic relation 'fills it out'. The function of the law is not to regulate the symbolic network as androcentric, but instead to render necessary the suturing of the subject to the phallic signifier in order to defer psychosis.

In other words, "the law of castration is *not* taken as a contingent ideological formation" precisely because it is neither contingent nor ideological. Rather than functioning as the inaugural moment of an immutably androcentric symbolic configuration, the law is instead that which *renders impossible the totalization of the social field*. Thus, the Law-of-the-Father is in no way androcentric; one may even perhaps go so far as to say that the Law-of-the-Father is not the Father's law. It is not castration which attributes an illusory, ideological consistency to the symbolic network, but instead the ideological object whose place has always already been secured in the socius by the law. Quite simply, it is not the law which is of ideological concern, but the Zizekian "sublime object" whose phantasmatic presence is made necessary by the law. In this sense, one could speak of the 'sublime object of patriarchy', by which androcentrism is unconsciously sutured to penile anatomical 'privilege'. It is precisely the imaginary

link posited by the collective phantasy of patriarchy which accords to the penis an illusory signifying function which covers over, veils both the subject's constitutive lack and the unsignifiable, traumatic kernel at the centre of the Other.

Thus, the accusation Butler directs toward Zizek for conceiving of the law as "preideological" (196) is entirely accurate; what Butler does not understand, however, is that the Lacanian law of castration does not 'mean' anything. There is nothing that can be done about the law, that is to say that there is no way of 'subverting' it, but this need not be cause for concern. Rather than legislating an androcentric and heterosexist "oedipal scene" (197), the law instead ensures that the neo-Freudian Oedipus, conceived as one of a series of possible reaction-formations to the traumatic real of the law, never succeeds in maintaining its hegemonic and androcentric primacy. The law emblematizes nothing but the hole in the Other, the necessity for culture to compensate for its traumatic kernel by hallucinating ideological consistency. In other words, there is always a traumatic 'surplus' to patriarchy by which the phallic subject attempts to stave off that which s/he desperately tries to deny. As we shall see in the next chapter, this traumatic 'surplus' manifests itself as, among other things, male violence against women and, in David Lynch's *Fire Walk with Me*, as father-daughter incest.

By presupposing the law as ideological, Butler is forced to perform an elaborate, complex 'deconstructive' analysis of the psychoanalytic notion of castration. Of course, such an analysis is doomed to failure within the terms of psychoanalytic theory. Since the law is situated at a point radically outside the space occupied by the ideological object, it may not, *tout court*, be subjected to an ideological analysis precisely because it is anideological. The law and ideology are entirely out of reach from one another; any attempt to 'subvert' the law necessarily attributes to it a 'meaning' which it does not have.

One of the notions Butler objects to most vehemently in her consideration of Zizek is the notion of the formal equivalence of the various traumatic kernels which emerge as symptoms throughout the course of history. Because psychoanalysis posits the lack in both the subject and the symbolic network as indices of *la condition humaine*, the symptomatic dimension of the subject's psyche remains an historical constant. On Butler's view, Zizek is guilty of historical reification when he claims that "historicist" and "poststructuralist" accounts of human subjectivity fail to explain the persistence of the traumatic event which emerges in the form of the Gulag, the Holocaust, the threat of Armageddon. The pernicious effect of this notion of the transhistorical trauma is constituted for Butler by the fact that "the self-identical principle" of the trauma "reduces any and all qualitative differences among social formations (identities, communities, practices, etc.) to a formal equivalence" (202).

What we find here is yet another example of a criticism which in fact paradoxically paraphrases the Lacanian claim. Zizek is not saying at this point in his text that there is no historical variation in the *content* of a given ideology's mode of *jouissance*. In other words, he would not deny the qualitative differences

between the Japanese interned by the Canadian and American governments during World War II, the Jews massacred at Auschwitz, and the dissidents of the Stalinist Gulag. The point to be made here relates to the *form* of the trauma. What is transhistorical in Lacanian theory is the inadequacy of the symbolic network to refer to the entire range of objects and phenomena in the social field. Further, this inadequacy defines the human subject as such; because of the obscene surplus generated by the act of signification, the subject must phantasize an object which fills out the inconsistency in the Other. In other words, the unconscious is accounted for in Lacanianism by the emergence of language, whose function it is to account for the primordially lost object. Given the irrecuperability of *das Ding*, however, the subject must fill out the void left over by the inadequacy of the signifying chain by hallucinating its relation to the missing signifier, the primordial signifier of difference (S_1). It is precisely this transhistorical structural necessity which links the Gulag and Auschwitz, the Bosnian and Kurdish massacres.

The extent to which Butler reads the Lacanian law of castration as an ideological one, that is to say as the inaugural, performatively self-legitimating moment of heteropatriarchal culture, is revealed in passages such as the one which follows, in which she accuses Zizek of avoiding his own encounter with the real, in this instance the "abjected" discourses of "feminism, Foucault, and poststructuralism."

> To claim that there is an "outside" to the socially intelligible, and that this "outside" will always be that which negatively defines the social is, I think, a point on which we can concur. To delimit that outside through the invocation of a preideological "law," a prediscursive "law" that works invariantly throughout all history, and further, to make that law function to secure a sexual differential that ontologizes subordination, is an "ideological" move in a more ancient sense, one that might only be understood through a rethinking of ideology as "reification." *That there is always an "outside" and, indeed, a "constitutive antagonism" seems right, but to supply the character and content to a law that secures the borders between the "inside" and the "outside" of symbolic intelligibility is to preempt the specific social and historical analysis that is required, to conflate into "one" law the effect of a convergence of many, and to preclude the very possibility of a future rearticulation of that boundary which is central to the democratic project that Zizek, Laclau, and Mouffe promote.* (206-207)

Perhaps we may summarize here the points at which Butler strays off the track. As Butler states, the law is indeed "preideological" and "prediscursive," in the sense that the law is that which is always already there and which renders the hallucination of the "sublime object of ideology" (be it in relation to gender or whatever) necessary in the first place. However, *in no way* does this law "secure a

sexual differential that ontologizes subordination." First, the real of the law is that which disrupts, as opposed to secures, the ontic coherence of the object. Second, the law is precisely that which *dismantles* the structural hegemony which may arise from the configuration of the gendered positions, the formulae of sexuation, in discourse. In other words, if Butler is to 'go after something' in psychoanalysis, it would be in her interests to attack the paradoxical logic of 'masculinity', as does Silverman in her most recent work, since the law is that which 'deconstructs' 'masculinity' in the first place.

In addition, to continue my criticism of the Butler passage, the Lacanian notion of the structural recurrence of the real in all discursive configurations in history does not preclude "specific social and historical analysis." On the contrary, with the foundational notion of the *formal recurrence* of the "boundaries" of which Butler speaks, radical democratic historical analysis becomes more powerful and subversive than it would otherwise be. Far from precluding "the very possibility of a future rearticulation of that boundary," Lacanian psychoanalysis instead lays bare how that boundary is *always already forced to rearticulate itself in order to maintain the illusion of its precarious coherence and transhistoricity*. By theorizing the *formal equivalence* of the obscene surplus of enjoyment, Lacanian psychoanalysis allows the historian to perform a powerful analysis of the genocidal massacre through which this enjoyment is so often made disturbingly manifest.

Finally, a significant chunk of Butler's misreading of Lacan and Zizek consists in her reification of the complex, dynamic, dialectical relationship between the symbolic and the real. Of course, as is evident, this reification functions in a manner startlingly similar to her misreading of the relation between the symbolic and imaginary discussed at a previous point in this chapter. Butler conceives of the real as "the impossible 'outside' to discourse" which institutes "a permanently unsatisfiable desire for an ever elusive referent: the sublime object of ideology." Thus, "the fixity and universality of this relation between language and the real produces [...] a prepolitical pathos that precludes the kind of analysis that would take the real/reality distinction as the instrument and effect of contingent relations of power" (207). The relationship between "language and the real" is thus conceived as ahistorical and fixed, as an insurmountable obstacle for the analysis of the effects of relations of power.

Instead of rendering the historical analysis of configurations of power impossible, the real is instead the analytic tool *par excellence* for the demonstration of the manner in which ideology conceals beneath its fascinating surface the impossible- real *jouissance* which renders historical moments such as Hitlerian fascism possible. Little analytic work is required to draw a subversive parallel between, for example, the ideological object of fascism which exterminated millions of Jews, Gypsys, 'homosexuals' and other 'undesirables' and the ideological object of what could be termed 'macho masculinity' which rests upon the violent mutilation of millions of women across the globe.

5. Lacanian Ethics and the Sublime Object of Gender

It remains to be said in our *riposte* to Butler that the aspect of both Zizek's and Lacan's work which she entirely ignores is the crucially important *ethical* one. At no point in her analysis does Butler comment upon the implications for political *practice* suggested by these authors. In *Tarrying with the Negative*, Zizek analyzes the various 'stages' in Lacan's work as they relate to the ethical implications of the subject's 'duty' in regard to the obscene enjoyment of *jouissance*.

> Up to the last stage of his teaching, the predominant ethical attitude of Lacanian psychoanalysis involved a kind of Brechtian gesture of distancing: first the distancing from imaginary fascination through the work of symbolic "mediation"; then the assumption of symbolic castration, of the lack constitutive of desire; then the "going through the fantasy": the assumption of the inconsistency of the Other concealed by the fantasy-scenario. What all these definitions have in common is that they conceive of the concluding moment of the psychoanalytic cure as a kind of "exit": as a move *out*, out from imaginary captivation, out from the Other. In his very last phase, however, Lacan outlines a reversal of perspective, unheard of as to its radicality: the concluding moment of the psychoanalytic cure is attained when the subject fully assumes his or her identification with the sinthome, when he or she unreservedly "yields" to it, rejoins the place where "it was," giving up the false distance which defines our everyday life.[31]

Although it belongs to prior phases of Lacanianism than the one stressed here by Zizek, *Séminaire VII* stresses the importance of the real in the formulation of the ethical position of psychoanalysis.[32] Clearly, Lacan acknowledges that the subject is radically dependent upon the phantasmatic structure by which it is sutured to the signifier. However, a constant of Lacanianism in the field of ethics lies in the effort to *disengage* the subject from the tyrannical, totalitarian effect of this fixation, be it through distancing in the initial phases of Lacan's thought, or in the more radical identification with the *sinthome* theorized at the end of his career. This disengaging of the subject occurs through nothing but the targeting of the real as the impossible/ ethical goal of the analytic cure. It is precisely by means of the 'dangerous' destabilization of the subject's ego executed by means of access to the real which constitutes both the essence of Freud's own self-analysis documented in *The Interpretation of Dreams* and the unrealizable, quasi-psychotic 'ideal' of psychoanalysis.

What, though, are the implications of Zizek's words as regards what I want to call 'the ethics of gender'? What Lacanian psychoanalysis has to offer feminism and queer theory is simply this: that no amount of retheorizing and reformulating

the gender binarism will solve the 'problem' of sexual difference. There is no way of reconstituting 'masculinity' and 'femininity' in such a manner that 'the battle between the sexes', or the 'battle between sexual orientations' will be resolved. Any attempt to signify the 'sexual relationship', however one may wish to concieve of it, is doomed to failure. The ethical implication of psychoanalysis in relation to gender is that the subject must attempt to first 'recognize' the phantasmatic status of its gender. 'Masculinity' has nothing whatever to do with the way 'men really are'; 'femininity' has nothing whatever to do with the/ a/ any woman.

Along Althusserian lines, it is possible to conceive of gender as a mode of ideological interpellation by which the subject's recognition of itself in 'the call of gender' obfuscates the fact that this recognition itself constitutes the 'content' of gender as a means of "eluding the abyss of [the 'barred' subject]."[33] Yet, at the same time, it is impossible to negate the effect of our unconscious gender phantasy. It remains for the subject to identify with its gender phantasy as the 'extimate' *sinthome* at the kernel of its being in order, paradoxically, to counter its effect. For 'masculine' subjects, this would mean something like this: "my 'masculinity' has very much to do with the obscene preponderance of male violence against women (or violence in general), yet the only thing I can do about this is to recognize the 'masculine object' at the kernel of my being as that without which I am condemned to psychosis." It remains for ('feminine') feminist appropriators of Lacan to determine exactly what the ethical implications of 'femininity' would be.

But of what exactly would the dark underside of the *sinthome* of gender consist? What is the nature of the traumatic kernel hidden behind the subject's "sublime object" of gender? The real of gender is, simply put, the subject's *transsexuality*. By contrast to certain psychoanalytic theorists of gender who have attempted to recuperate non-normative subjectivities by recourse to a so-called pre-oedipal moment, the Lacanian notion of the real allows us instead to posit a radical, post-oedipal transsexuality 'covered over' by the subject's hallucination of gender. In other words, behind the *aufgehoben* phallic signifier lies the traumatic kernel not of a pre-gendered or pre-sexed position, but of a real *transgendered* and *transsexed* 'void'. The forever imperfect Hegelian 'synthesis' effected by the phantasy of gender coherence and 'meaning' raises the subject above the radical and dialectical "constitutive antagonism" of its real transsexuality.

The void of gender is to be conceived temporally not as a moment *prior to* sexuation, but as a paradoxically substanceless object neither male nor female, nor both at the same time, upon which the illusions of 'pure' 'femininity' and 'pure' 'masculinity' are phantasized. In other words, the function of the subject's morphological, narcissistic identification with the "ideal type" of its sex functions to occlude the fact that the gender binarism is more primordially a kind of "disjunctive synthesis"[34] which may never by synthesized or 'raised to the function of the signifier', but instead commits the subject to an unhypostatizable wavering between the 'poles' of gender.

One must be extremely careful, however, and refuse to idealize the real of gender *qua* transsexuality. In keeping with the Lacanian theorization of the real, the hard kernel of the subject is inherently intolerable and constitutes the threat of psychosis from which the subject seeks narcissistic relief. In other words, by positing transsexuality as the real of gender, my intention is not to offer an alternative, as it were, to the conventional formulae of sexuation as offered by Lacan. In fact, much work remains to be done on the question of the immutability of the 'masculine' and 'feminine' relations to the phallus and what this may mean in terms of the political projects of feminism and queer theory.

By positing the real of gender as transsexuality, my intention is rather to further ground the power of psychoanalysis to denaturalize gender, to render the subject aware of the fact that it is not that which its anatomy would lead it to think it is. This theory seeks to be effective without creating new genders, or even new "morphological imaginaries" *à la* Judith Butler which, though momentarily empowering, are nonetheless immanently 'deconstructible' precisely because of their phantasmatic status. Ultimately, the real of gender *qua* transsexuality is the intolerable specter which renders necessary the subject's genderal repetition compulsion in discourse and which opens up an uncoverable crack in the fascinating, smooth surface of the "sublime object" of gender.

Notes

1 Slavoj Zizek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology*, p. 83.

2 Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, p. 4. Laclau and Mouffe define their political project in the strict terms of a "post-Marxian terrain." Their aspiration to inaugurate a new era of thinking on the left begins with the leaving behind of a theoretical monism by which history is conceived through essential categories and communism posited as a realizable utopian ideal in which, when reached, all conflict between elements of the socius will come to an abrupt end. It is precisely this deconstruction of the potential resolution of the constitutive antagonism of the socius upon which Slavoj Zizek builds his Lacanian reconceptualization of the notion of ideology.

3 The reader will perhaps wonder here why I have begun to discourse about "gender" under an epigraph ostensibly about the category of "sexuality." In this sense, I could be accused of confusing the important theoretical difference established by feminist theory between the two categories. However, as I shall show throughout this chapter, Lacan's and Zizek's pronouncements on "sexuality"

have much more to do with gender than sexuality. On this view, Lacan's axiom "il n'y a pas de relation sexuelle" may mean two things: 1) that there is no signifier for sexuality *qua* copulation, since copulation belongs to the register of the real and 2) that there is no signifier which may adequately designate the relation between 'masculine' and 'feminine' *qua* (imaginary) genders. Put another way, the genders are in no way 'complementary'; they are not, when added together, equal to the sum of 'One'.

4 Slavoj Zizek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*, pp. 63-66, 97-99.

5 Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, p. 90. Further references to this book are incorporated into the text.

6 Butler in fact does not use the Freudian term "ideational representative" (*Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*), but the German idealist term "idea" (59). There is clearly massive confusion at work in Butler's attempt to 'translate' Freudianism into her own theoretical vocabulary. It has been suggested to me by Dianne Chisholm that much of the difficulty of Butler's reading of Freud stems from the former's residual Hegelianism, and hence the more phenomenological cast to her reading than Freud himself would in all likelihood have allowed. Laplanche and Pontalis state that the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* is the term used by Freud in such metapsychological texts as "Repression" and *The Unconscious* to define "the relationship between soma and psyche as that of the instinct to its representatives." In other words, the ideational representative functions in Freud as that which constitutes the unconscious as an effect of primal repression. In this sense, the idea *qua* unconscious representative would have little to do with the "idea" of German idealism. Finally, the Laplanche and Pontalis statement suggests that Butler's desire to look at the relation between body and psyche should have directed her not to *On Narcissism*, but to the two texts referred to by the French analysts. The analysis of Butler's idealization of Freud is pursued in subsequent paragraphs. See Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, p. 204.

7 A more pertinent discussion of what is really at issue in *On Narcissism* may be found in Jean Laplanche, "The Ego and Narcissism," *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, pp. 66-84.

8 "Idealization is a process that concerns the object; by it that object, without any alteration in its nature, is aggrandized and exalted in the subject's mind." See Freud, *On Narcissism: An Introduction*, p. 88.

9 See the entries under "Idea" and "Ideational representative" in Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 200-201, 203-205. In "Repression," Freud himself explains the process of primary repression as that by which the "representative of the instinct" is "denied entrance into the conscious," and in which "the representative in question persists unaltered from then onwards and the instinct remains attached to it." See Freud, "Repression," p. 147.

10 Sigmund Freud, *On Narcissism*, p. 77.

11 One of the difficulties of Butler's Hegelianization of psychoanalysis lies precisely in Lacan's move away from the Hegelian dialectic. In *Séminaire XX*, in the context of a discussion of courtly love, Lacan explains that "il n'y a pas eu après [l'amour courtois] la moindre synthèse, bien entendu - il n'y en a d'ailleurs jamais. [...] L'*Aufhebung* est un de ces jolis rêves de philosophie." Lacan's point here is that neither during the practice of courtly love nor during any subsequent period has there been a sense of complementarity in the heterosexual relationship. From a wider philosophical perspective, Lacan insists that synthesis is impossible, and that it is on the register of the imaginary, in the subject's narcissistic relation, that this truth is unsuccessfully evaded. In the context of my argument, Butler presupposes a compatibility between the imaginary and symbolic which is vehemently disallowed in Lacanianism. The symbolic network of 'kinship relations' remains forever inadequate (in terms of the prohibition of incest, for example), and in no way is it capable of consolidating the subject's gender phantasy. See Lacan, *Séminaire XX*, p. 79.

12 Lacan uses as an analogy for this notion the infamous *noeud borroméen*, which demonstrates that once one element of the signifying chain, emblematized by the *rond de ficelle*, is detached, the remaining links of the chain are set free as well. See *Séminaire XX*, p. 117.

13 Joan Copjec has written about the negligence of the real in recent discussions of the relation of psychoanalysis to politics. See Copjec, "Cutting Up."

14 Slavoj Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 95.

15 Moustapha Safouan has expounded upon the impossiblility for the subject to know the Other in its entirety, and the consequent necessity to hallucinate the "lost part" of the Other, *das Ding*. See Safouan, *Pleasure and Being*, p. 9.

16 In *Séminaire VII*, Lacan underlines the intractable character of the phantasy in the subject's positioning in the symbolic network. "En fin de compte, sans quelque chose qui l'hallucine en tant que système de référence, aucun monde de la perception n'arrive à s'ordonner de façon valable, à se constituer de façon humaine. Le monde de la perception nous est donné par Freud comme dépendant de cette hallucination fondamentale sans laquelle il n'y aurait aucune attention disponible." Thus, the "world of perception" is entirely dependent upon the subject's hallucination of the Freudian- Lacanian *das Ding*. Because of the hallucinatory status of this relation, however, the ego will hold on to its coherence only precariously. *Das Ding* will be jeopardized by the masochistic manifestation of the death drive emerging from the real; Lacan makes it clear that it is to this latter register to which psychoanalytic ethics applies. See *Séminaire VII: L'Éthique de la psychanalyse*, p. 66. The political implications of the relation between the register of the real and the ethical dimension of Lacanianism will be discussed in the concluding section of this chapter.

17 The effects of this constitutive black hole, which functions to signify the register of the real in Lacan, upon the subject's gender will be further discussed at a later point of this chapter.

18 Jacques Lacan, *Séminaire II*, p. 119.

19 On the topic of *la qua* phallic signifier in the formula for *la femme*, Lacan states "ce *la* est un signifiant dont le propre est qu'il est le seul qui ne peut rien signifier [...]." *Séminaire XX*, p. 68.

20 Jacques Lacan, *Séminaire XX*, p. 68.

21 Ellie Ragland-Sullivan has explained why Woman *qua* masculinist phantasy is both fascinating and repulsive to the heterosexual 'masculine' subject, thereby stressing the radical critique mounted by the Lacanian conception of gender against the patriarchal imaginary. "Although woman is a signifier and can, thus, be represented as a class, she is not the source of plenitude delineated in myth (and, within that context, worshiped as a goddess, a wooden image, a person, and, conversely, denigrated, humiliated, and mistreated). The masculinist essentialization of woman in the name of the problematic of lack and repression is no favor, if one reads Lacan." See Ragland-Sullivan, "Seeking the Third Term," p. 56.

22 Slavoj Zizek offers in *Tarrying with the Negative* a dense, fascinating reading of Lacan's formulae of sexuation through the prism of the Kantian

dynamical and mathematical antinomies of pure reason. Although I shall leave it to the Kant scholars to argue about the plausibility of such a reading, a brief, reductive synopsis of its relevance to our inquiry will be helpful here. By drawing a parallel between the mathematical antinomy and the formula of sexuation for 'femininity', and between the dynamical antinomy and the formula for 'masculinity', Zizek attempts to uncover in Kant a precedent for Lacan's calling into question of the relation of contrariety conventionally presupposed in binarist thinking. In sum, "the universal function *implies* a constitutive exception; the lack of exception to the function F *prevents* its universal span." See "The 'Formulae of Sexuation'," *Tarrying with the Negative*, pp. 53-58.

23 Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 686.

24 "On s'y range [par rapport au phallus], en somme, par choix - libre aux femmes de s'y placer si ça leur fait plaisir. Chacun sait qu'il y a des femmes phalliques, et que la fonction phallique n'empêche pas les hommes d'être homosexuels." Lacan's choice of words is extremely interesting here. First, there is in this transcription the implication that the assumption on the part of the subject of its gender is one of choice. Of course, this choice is in all likelihood not a conscious one, but a choice nevertheless it remains. Second, there is the question of pleasure in gender; Lacan implies here that the subject's alignment on one side or the other of the phallus is a function of pleasure, that is to say a function of the narcissistic reinforcement provided by the illusory sight of oneself 'reflected' in the signifier. See *Séminaire XX*, p. 67.

25 "Ces jaculations mystiques, ce n'est ni du bavardage, ni du verbiage, c'est en somme ce qu'on peut lire de mieux - tout à fait en bas de page, note - Y ajouter les *Écrits* de Jacques Lacan, parce c'est du même ordre." *Séminaire XX*, p. 71.

26 One may in fact want to note here the peculiar resonance of Elisabeth Roudinesco's analysis of the gender psychodynamics of Lacan's relations to his analysands-students. She qualifies Lacan's treatment of the male members of the *école* as protective and maternal, and his dealings with women in his school as authoritative and demanding. See Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan & Co.*.

27 Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 690.

28 Slavoj Zizek, *Looking Away*, p.19.

29 Judith Butler cites Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p.75.

30 In "*Cogito* and the Sexual Difference," Zizek draws a philosophical parallel between the Lacanian subject of the unconscious (the barred subject $) and the Kantian subject, defined as "the empty subject of the transcendental apperception." This "pure form of apperception" is nothingness itself, the void which may not be accounted for symbolically in the big Other. Zizek's point is that in order for the subject to acquire (self-) consciousness, the institution of the object relation is required. In other words, in order for the subject to be conscious of itself, it must first locate the object of consciousness in another subject. "Intersubjectivity *stricto sensu* involves the subject's radical decenteredness: only when my self-consciousness is externalized in an object do I begin to look for it in another subject. [...] It is only with Kant [in the history of philosophy], with his notion of the subject as $, as the empty form of self-apperception, as an entity which constitutively 'does not know what it is', that the Other Subject is needed for me to define my own identity: what the Other thinks I am is inscribed into the very heart of my own most intimate self-identity [that is, the 'extimate' object in the 'centre' of the subject]." See *Tarrying with the Negative*, pp. 68-69.

31 Zizek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, p. 61.

32 "Le discours freudien fraie, dans l'énoncé du problème éthique, quelque chose qui, par son articulation, nous permet d'aller plus loin qu'on n'est jamais allé dans ce qui est l'essentiel du problème moral. [...] C'est autour du terme de réalité, du vrai sens de ce mot, toujours employé par nous de façon si inconsidérée, que se situe la puissance de la conception de Freud [...]." By referring here to the "true sense" of the word "reality" in Freud, Lacan is offering to the auditors of his seminar a kind of psychoanalytic genealogy of the notion of what in Lacan becomes the real. The antecedent of this register is traced to the Freudian notion of the reality principle. The importance here for our purposes is that Lacan underlines the extent to which the 'essence' of the Freudian discovery is an ethical one: the commitment to the symbolization of the real as that by which the analytic cure is effected. See "Une relecture de l'*Entwurf*," *Séminaire VII*, p. 47. Jean Laplanche has also expounded upon the function of the death drive, which is of course intimately related to the Lacanian real, in the ethical dimension of Freudianism. See Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, pp. 5-7.

33 Slavoj Zizek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, p. 74.

34 Astute readers of the antipsychiatric persuasion will detect here a not-so-covert reference to Deleuze and Guattari. These same readers will probably also note a kind of fraternal affinity between my theorization of the real of gender *qua* transsexuality and Deleuze and Guattari's own theorization of transsexuality *qua*

schizo-subjective ideal. Although I have much sympathy for Deleuze and Guattari's project, and acknowledge that they have much to say about the noxious familialist excesses of the neo-Freudians, it must be stated that their theorization of the shizo amounts to the sanctioning of psychosis as a subjective ideal. Despite the fact that their notion of "disjunctive synthesis" goes a long way toward the (speculative) theoretical elaboration of the Lacanian real, in no way is it realistic to posit the dysfunctional schizo-psychotic as a revolutionary subjectivity. In the words of Ragland-Sullivan, "the psychotic does not know his or her gender clearly enough to lean upon that knowledge as the basis of an identity, not even as the basis of an either/ or gender choice. [...] Instead, delusional reformulations of the universe bring agony and despair, often suicide, rather than the supposedly joyful pleasure to be found on *mille plateaux* in an imaginary poetic weave of being to language and sexuality." Ragland-Sullivan clearly places too much emphasis in this utterance upon the stability of gender identification in Lacanianism and the impossibility of transitivism between genders. As I have shown, Lacan himself serves as 'proof' of the latter claim. Nevertheless, one must admit that the genderal confusion characteristic of both the Lacanian psychotic and the Deleuzo-Guattarian schizo manifests itself subjectively in terms of intolerable psychic pain. For Deleuze and Guattari's elaboration of the "disjunctive synthesis" and its relation to transsexuality, see *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, pp. 76-77. Ellie Ragland-Sullivan's covert reference to *Mille Plateaux* may be found in her introduction to *Lacan and the Subject of Language*, p.7. For a more useful critique of the institutionalization of psychoanalysis which draws upon the antipsychiatric tradition, see Maud Mannoni, *Le psychiatre, son « fou » et la psychanalyse*.

4. Lynch with Lacan: Phallus *Walk with Me*

So you wanna fuck the homecoming queen?

- Laura Palmer

The opening credits of David Lynch's most recent film, *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* (1992), are figured against an extreme close-up of television 'snow'. As the credit sequence continues, this 'snow' is brought into clearer focus, and the silhouette of a television set emerges from the edges of the cinema screen. At this moment, as the spectator is provided with the reference points required to establish perspective, it becomes aware that what has just been viewed has been a dolly shot. As the camera completes its backward motion, a heavy object is smashed against the top of the television set by an off-screen agent. As the screen shatters into innumerable fragments, the image of television 'snow' disappears. A woman's shrill scream is heard from off-screen space, and a blunt 'thud' suggests that this woman has been brutally struck.

Due to the remarkable success and influence of the television series *Twin Peaks* upon which the film is based, as well as the subsequent and drastic drop in its quality and popularity, the opening credit sequence of the film has been interpreted by many as a vengeful comment by director David Lynch upon both the fickleness of the American television audience and the 'lowest-common-denominator' conservatism of the ABC network executives. However, my contention in this chapter will be that the filmic enunciator[1] is up to something much more significant and profound both in this opening sequence and in the rest of the film. Although strangely dismissed as a cynical, self-indulgent move by Lynch to cash in on both the success of the series in a wide variety of markets and the coveted *Palme d'Or* he received at Cannes for his previous feature *Wild at Heart* (1990),[2] I will argue that *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* may be read as a radical and subversive exploration of the questions of primary and secondary identification in the cinema, as well as a biting and far-reaching critique of both the imaginary and symbolic formations of patriarchal culture. In its cinematic figuration of the Lacanian real, the film thematizes the return of the repressed underside of the male subject's phallic identification, thereby documenting the violent results of his vain attempt to maintain control over the signifying network.

Taking the cue from Slavoj Zizek's article "Grimaces of the Real," I will read the Lynch film as a cinematic figuration of that Lacanian register which protrudes from the lack in the Other to disrupt current signifying practices and egoic formations. Paying special attention to those 'weird' sequences of the film which attempt to fracture both the linear, diachronic temporality of the filmic apparatus and the cinematic identifications upon which spectatorial pleasure is based, I will attempt to elucidate how Lynch's film implicitly critiques both the

patriarchal imaginary which circumscribes identificatory options available to women, and the phallic and paternalist superegoic form which masks the violently incestuous 'surplus' lying at the root of Laura Palmer's victimization. What emerges from this analysis will begin to show how the credit sequence of the film prefigures the problem it will explore: how the illusion of paternal authority enters into dialectical conflict with the Lacanian real of desire. This tension emerges in such a manner that the structuration of our culture upon acts of violence against women is both established and contested. The Lynchian spectator is forced to confront, in a classically psychoanalytic moment, the repressed underside of patriarchal culture and the murderous toll it exerts upon the female subject.

1. Cinematic Identification and Spectatorial Suturing or, Why the TV Gets Smashed

In his landmark essay "Le signifiant imaginaire," Christian Metz draws upon Freudian, Kleinian, and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory in his attempt to theorize a parallel between the subject's constitutive egoic identification and the filmic spectator's subjectivation by the cinematic apparatus. Metz invents the term "identification cinématographique primaire" (primary cinematic identification) in order to both designate this process by which the subject is constituted as spectator and to distinguish it, in its cinematic specificity, from both Freud's primary identification and Lacan's mirror-stage specular relation. Despite his insistence upon the irreducibility of identification in the cinema to the Freudian paradigm, Metz states that "there is no break in continuity"[3] between psychoanalytic theory's findings about the grounding of the subject in culture and what happens to the film spectator during the viewing experience. Above and beyond the important features which distinguish identification in 'real life' from identification in the cinema, what Freud's, Lacan's, and Metz's theories have in common is their attempt to explain the subject's consitution of itself as unified, coherent, and perceiving.

It is important to note for the purposes of this chapter that in all three cases of identification, the establishment of the egoic structure is predicated upon a fundamental *méconnaissance*: the form upon which identification is predicated is characterized by its irreducible exteriority in relation to the subject, by its fundamental otherness. It is this notion of something foreign in the very core of the intimate which led Lacan to coin the term "*extimité*" to qualify the consciousness of the subject in its mediation by an exterior object.[4] This very inmixture of otherness at the core of the self disrupts the inside-outside binary by positing an 'exterior object' (the *objet petit a*) at the very centre of the subject's 'interior', of the subject's being. Though this otherness constitutes the core of the subject's sense of itself, the uncanniness of this object in the subject manifests itself in the affect of anxiety. To borrow a Lacanian axiom, this sublime object is "in the subject more than itself";[5] the subject is overcome by the impression that it

is constituted by an obscene surplus which renders opaque its phantasized self-transparency. It is thus that the subject's scopic drive for secondary and compensatory, but forever inadequate, identifications is inaugurated.

In an effort to counter the inherent instability of its ontic status, the spectatorial subject desires to identify with the 'all-seeing' gaze of the camera, which stands in for the subject's specular ego during the viewing experience. As compensation for its primordial castration (the viewing subject is, on the Lacanian view, always already castrated), the spectator entertains the illusion that it is scopically omnipotent. Despite the absence of its figure on the screen, the spectator nonetheless sees itself, phantasmatically, as "grand oeil et grande oreille sans lesquels le perçu n'aurait personne pour le percevoir, instance constituante, en somme, du signifiant de cinéma (c'est moi [en tant que spectateur] qui fais le film)."[6] The spectator thereby "*s'identifie à lui-même*, à lui-même comme pur acte de perception (comme éveil, comme alerte) : comme condition de possibilité du perçu et donc comme à une sorte de sujet transcendantal, antérieur à tout *il y a*" (69).

Conflating its own limited look with the unlimited gaze of the camera,[7] the spectatorial subject imagines that during the viewing process the projector functions as point of origin for the images on the screen. Referring to the work of psychoanalyst André Green, Metz asserts that in the spectator's imaginary schema this camera/ projector is positioned "*at the back of his head*" (70). As is underlined by these formulations, the imaginary constitution of the cinema spectator is inherently paradoxical for Metz, given that the spectator must position itself simultaneously at several different points in space in order to maintain the illusion that its own consciousness is the source of the filmic image; this paradox, however, is masked by the agency of the spectator's imaginary. Not the projector, the camera, nor the screen but, in a sense, *all of these at once*, the subject's 'impossible' phantasies are essential to the functioning of the cinematic apparatus *as such*; without primary cinematic identification, in other words, Metz insists that the illusion of the cinema would cease to function effectively (71).

Having established the means by which the cinematic apparatus constitutes its own spectators, I will now examine the ramifications of this process in terms of sexual politics and ideology. This linkage of the process of primary cinematic identification with the ideology of sexual difference provides the theoretical background necessary for my discussion of the subversion of this relation in the Lynch film. Referring to the work of Christian Metz, Jacques-Alain Miller, and Louis Althusser, Kaja Silverman discusses in *The Subject of Semiotics* the ideological effects of spectatorial identification. Silverman recounts that the inscription of the subject in cinematic diegetic space occurs through the process of suturing theorized by, among others, Jacques-Alain Miller and Stephen Heath.[8] Suturing is "the name given to the procedures by means of which cinematic texts confer subjectivity upon their viewers."[9]

In Lacanian terms, the suture functions in a manner parallel to that of the *point de capiton*, the point at which the subject is 'stitched' into the signifying chain. This stitching constitutes the subject as an effect of the failure of the signifying network. Because of the lack in the Other, the inadequacy and incompleteness of the symbolic network, the subject sees the light of day as a positivized empty form which fills out the gap in the differential network of signifiers. Silverman explains, after Jean-Pierre Oudart, that the function of the suture in the signifying apparatus of the cinema is to compensate for the pain of castration, for the subject's awareness that it is only an effect of the Other's lack, of the Other's inability to signify the entire range of phenomena. This compensation occurs through the transference of the gaze of the camera onto a character within the filmic diegesis. For Silverman, "it is only by inflicting the wound to begin with that the viewing subject can be made to want the restorative of meaning and narrative" provided by the mechanism of secondary identification (204).

This compensatory "meaning and narrative" attributed to the subject by the film's enunciation has far-reaching ideological effects. Because of the spectator's inherent lack, it has no choice but to assume the film's "meaning" as its own. In a manner parallel to Zizek's discussion of the "call of gender" discussed in the previous chapter, Silverman applies the Althusserian critique of ideology to the question of sexual difference, but this time in the context of the cinematic apparatus.[10] Silverman explains that suture is the process whereby "the subject constantly rediscovers itself in the same ideological representations by means of which it first knew itself."[11] In the dominant cinema, the subject is of course led to "rediscover" itself in such a manner that the androcentric and heterocentric figuration of sexual difference is consolidated. In other words, the diegetic look with which the spectatorial subject is led to identify usually belongs to a male character. Female characters are figured as pleasurable, erotic spectacles for the male character's look. In this manner, the ideology of androcentrism is passed on to the viewer who, immobile in a passive and dreamlike state in the movie theatre, has no choice but to take on the phantasy space of the film's enunciation. In a later section of this chapter, I will look at the manner in which the Lynchian enunciator problematizes the classical deployment of sexual difference in the cinema.

To consider once again the opening credit sequence of *Fire Walk With Me*, it becomes apparent in what manner the notions of identification and suture are problematized at the outset of the film. The function of this sequence in terms of the spectator's subjectivation is to highlight the fragility of the primary cinematic identification which allows the apparatus to be effective in the first place. This is achieved in at least two ways. First, instead of presenting a pleasurable, flattering mirror-image of the cinematic spectator, an image which would consolidate the formation of the specular ego, Lynch's credit sequence instead reflects television 'snow': the absence, in technical terms, of a television signal; and the absence, in

visual terms, of an image. In other words, whereas the dominant cinema structures itself in such a way as to facilitate the formation of the spectatorial ego by projecting to the viewer a pleasurable yet misrecognized perception of itself, the film's opening sequence instead reflects to the viewer the 'essence' of the Lacanian barred subject (S): a fundamental gap, an empty nothingness.

Second, through the smashing of the TV/mirror which concludes the credit sequence, the spectator is shown that whatever may be salvaged from its primary identification with 'nothingness' is revealed, at any rate, to be illusory. To refer back to the Metzian metaphor, the projector imagined by the subject "*at the back of his head*" is not only malfunctioning, but the very apparatus (in this case the television set, stand-in for the Lacanian mirror) which constitutes the condition of possibility for the intelligibility of the filmic image is, quite literally, destroyed. In sum, not only is the spectator denied the reassuring mirror-image of its own imagined plenitude, but the very structure of the illusion upon which this *méconnaissance* is based is shown to be radically precarious.

As for the film's association of the image of the smashed television set with the woman's scream on the soundtrack, similar observations may be made. It is clear, first of all, that this laying bare of cinematic identification is a painful, traumatic experience. It is also clear, however, that this destruction of the spectatorial ego is associated by the filmic enunciator with the *violent victimization of women*. As I will show, the return of the real signified and inaugurated by the credit sequence threatens the foundations of the paternal identification which grounds culture as patriarchal. The Lynchian filmic enunciator thereby rationalizes male violence against women as the effect of the fragility of phallic identification; this fragility is in fact put in jeopardy by phenomena signified by the sequences which will be in question in the following section.

In the context of what we may term *Fire Walk With Me*'s ideological program, the filmic enunciator's thematization of the ambivalence of cinematic identification is strategic in several ways. The spectator is subjectivized by the film's enunciation to desire *to a second degree*, and *from the very outset of the film*, a pleasurable compensation for the failure of primary cinematic identification, for the traumatic, *primal* (in the Freudian sense) event of castration signified by the smashing of the television. Because the mechanisms of the spectator's constitution of itself as all-seeing and omnipotent have, 'right off the bat', gone awry, the subsequent suturings of the film will be 'doubly' effective, given that they are craved by the castrated viewer. Put in yet another way, the spectator's identification with the film's *mise-en-scène* of both Leland's and Laura's phantasy spaces will be more eagerly anticipated than they would have been in the absence of the viewer's castration. This anticipation effectuated by the film functions to consolidate the viewer's secondary identifications with the main characters, in particular with Laura, through a paradoxical *mise-en-abyme* of the ineffectual, primary one.

In addition, as I will develop when I begin to examine the intrusion of the real in Leland's and Laura's phantasies, the anamorphotic spots of these phantasies, that is to say the points at which the images 'look back', will be effective to a similarly heightened degree.[12] By first betraying the contingency and fragility of primary cinematic identification, and then offering spectatorial compensation through the phantasy spaces of Leland and Laura, the Lynchian enunciator constructs an imaginary tension between the delusion of Leland's crumbling phallic identification and Laura's unwillingness to face the incestuous, 'surplus' underside of the paternally anchored symbolic order. In order to analyze these effects of subjectivation, however, I will have to consider the film in greater detail, in the context of its diegetic specificity.

2. David Lynch: Filmmaker of the Real

Before jumping into a close textual analysis of certain sequences of Lynch's film, it is wise to first contextualize by providing a brief survey. This will function simultaneously to announce the angle from which the analysis will be undertaken. Within the diegesis of *Twin Peaks* in its entirety, *Fire Walk With Me* occurs chronologically before the murder of Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) which marked the beginning of the television series. The feature-length film prologue is separated into two unequal parts. The first quarter of the film follows two FBI agents, Chet Desmond (Chris Isaak) and Sam Stanley (Kiefer Sutherland), who have been assigned to the investigation of the brutal murder of a young woman, Teresa Banks (Pamela Cadley), in a small town in the American Pacific Northwest. When Chet Desmond mysteriously disappears during the investigation, the film cuts to a temporal moment one year later, several days before the eventual murder of Laura Palmer, a beautiful high school student and homecoming queen.

The remaining three quarters of the film document the last days in Laura Palmer's life during which she is led to the traumatic realization that the mysterious phantasy figure Bob who climbs into her bedroom at night to rape her is in actuality her father, Leland Palmer (Ray Wise), a lawyer and pillar of the community. Severely shaken by these incidents of which she is only partially aware, Laura is increasingly drawn into the underworld of Twin Peaks, a network of small-time drug, pornography and prostitution rings. In many ways, *Fire Walk With Me* functions as a classic incest narrative 'spiced up', as it were, with Lynch's characteristic psychosexual intrigues and mytho-metaphysical kick. These latter occult elements of the film are presented during bizarre, seemingly indecipherable phantasy sequences which intersperse the film; they are distinguished from the 'normal' diegesis by reverse projection; surreal, unplaceable sound effects; fast-paced intercutting; 'X-ray' filters; and Lynch's patented, intensely personal and idiosyncratic symbolism.

It is presumably sequences in Lynch's *oeuvre* such as the ones just described which have caught the attention of Slavoj Zizek, the Slovenian

interpreter of the latter years of Lacanian teaching, whose work was discussed in the previous chapter. Zizek has referred to other Lynch films, namely *The Elephant Man* (1980), *Blue Velvet* (1986), and *Wild at Heart* (1990) in his ongoing effort to render Lacan's complex theory more accessible through readings of popular culture texts. As I have previously shown, the real in Lacan is the unsymbolizable, untranslatable kernel of the symbolic network, a fundamental lack in the Other, for which the subject must compensate by establishing the relation with the "extimate" object, the *objet petit a*. Like most of Lacan's concepts, especially those developed in his later teaching, the Lacanian real adamantly resists definition and systematization. Nevertheless, Zizek approaches this difficult question by attempting to document the metamophoses of the real in the various stages of Lacan's *séminaires*.

As I have shown, the real of the early Lacan is the idea "of a hard kernel resisting symbolization, dialectization, persisting in its place, always returning to it."[13] However,

> with the development of the Lacanian teaching in the sixties and seventies, what he calls "the real" more and more approaches what he called, in the fifties, the imaginary. Let's take the case of traumatism: in the fifties, in his first seminar, the tramatic event is defined as an imaginary entity which wasn't yet fully symbolized, given a place in the symbolic universe of the subject. In the seventies, the traumatism is real; it is a hard core resisting symbolization. But the point is that it doesn't matter if it took place, if it "really occurred" in so-called reality; the point is just that it produces a series of structural effects (displacements, repetitions, etc.). The real is an entity which should be constructed afterwards so that we can account for the distortions of the symbolic structure. (103)

David Lynch will be considered in the following paragraphs as the "filmmaker of the real." By staging the scene of the characters' (and the audience's) phantasy spaces, the Lynchian enunciator documents the functioning of an entity (a Freudian 'Thing') which, in itself, doesn't exist.[14] All the same, this Thing has what may be called 'radical effects of subjectivation', and it is to this last process that I shall now turn my attention. By attempting to put Lynch's seemingly incomprehensible sequences in dialogue with Zizek's version of the Lacanian real, I will attempt to arrive at a reading of these sequences which views them as radical subversions of the outward, phallic appearance of patriarchal culture: a culture which, embodied in the figure of Leland, attempts to cover up the violent, incestuous crimes repressed by the identification of the phallic male.

3. Of Patriarchal Identification and the Phallic Mask

One of the most important images of *Fire Walk with Me* for my purposes here occurs during the first 'sequence of the real'.[15] This sequence is inaugurated by the arrival of a mysterious man named Phillip Jeffries (David Bowie) at the FBI's Philadelphia headquarters. Acting on one of his 'intuitions', Agent Cooper (Kyle McLachlan) performs at this moment a curious experiment with the building's surveillance camera. Standing in front of the camera as Jeffries arrives, Cooper then moves to the room from which these cameras are monitored. To his surprise, Cooper's image is still on the screen of the TV monitor, suggesting that he is 'simultaneously' in the hallway where the camera is mounted and in the surveillance room watching his 'presence' in the hallway. Clearly, the physical laws of space have been momentarily suspended. Later, at the conclusion of this sequence of the real, we learn that according to the building's security system Jeffries was never actually present in the FBI building. Hence, Jeffries' entrance into the film's diegetic space emblematizes the intrusion of the real; the everyday laws of representation and perception cannot explain Cooper's and Jeffries' simultaneous presence/ absence. It is precisely from this space which cannot be accounted for in conventional terms that the film's surreal images emerge.

It should also be noted that the sequences in question are cinematically distinguished in a strikingly clear fashion from the rest of the film's diegetic space. For example, whereas the film's enunciation often relies upon classical shot/ reverse shot suturing, these special sequences emerge outside of any character's look, as well as outside of the film's 'regular' diegesis. Lynch's sequences of the real are accompanied on the soundtrack by the melancholy, laconic saxophone music heard during the opening credits. In addition, the images concerned are often superimposed with the television 'snow' also witnessed during the film's initial shots. In other words, the emergence of the real is related diegetically to the inaugural representation of the severance of conventional cinematic identification. Clearly, these images of the real are meant to emerge from nowhere, from a non-space in which our conventional modes of representation and signification fail spectacularly.[16]

Of all the hallucinatory images constituting the first of the film's depictions of the real, of particular interest here is a human figure dressed in a red suit (like the infamous 'dancing dwarf') who wears a white *papier maché* mask which conceals his face. This figure carries what appears to be a wooden stick and is yelling something which cannot be heard. Most significantly, the white mask is endowed with a protuberant, 'phallic' nose. At the conclusion of the sequence, this same mask is shown on the face of a prepubescent boy who was previously depicted seated on a chair and announcing, in distorted speech, the forthcoming murder. At one point during this sequence, there is a close-up of the figure removing the mask and revealing the face of the previously mentioned boy. Next, there is a cut to a more marked close-up of the boy removing the mask. This time,

however, the viewer is confronted by the image of a darkened, wrinkled, and shapeless face which, though not clearly visible in the shot in question, is later revealed in a similar sequence to be grotesquely deformed with vague, premature, foetus-like features.

For Slavoj Zizek, amorphous distortions of the face are among those preferred figures of filmic discourse for the representation of the protuberances of the real. Relating his discussion to the legend of the Phantom of the Opera (Leroux, Webber) and to the paintings of Edvard Munsch, Zizek theorizes the shapeless and deformed, often masked, face as "the paradox of the living dead."[17] In the context of the later Lacan, the substance of the real is between two deaths. Not 'alive', in the sense of representable in the field of the Other, yet not 'dead', in the sense of integrated into the symbolic domain, the real of enjoyment partakes in an impossible *jouissance*, during which the alienation of the subject in the void of the *objet a* has not yet occurred. On the amorphous face,

> the flesh has not yet assumed definite features; it dwells in a kind of preontological state, as if "melted," as if deformed by anamorphosis. The horror lies not in his [the face's] death mask, but rather *in what is concealed beneath it*, in the *palpitating skinned flesh*. [...] The place of the "living dead" is not somewhere between the dead and the living; it is precisely as the dead that they are "more alive than life itself," having access to the life-substance prior to its symbolic mortification. Lacanian psychoanalysis locates the cause of this deformity in the anamorphotic gaze, the gaze sustained by an incestuous enjoyment: the anamorphotic distortion of reality is the way the gaze is inscribed into the object's surface. (47, my emphasis)

One need not stress the uncanny manner in which Zizek's description of the real approximates the ugly creature behind the mask in *Fire Walk With Me*. Neither should it surprise that the example used by Zizek to illustrate the motif of the amorphous face is taken from another Lynch film, *The Elephant Man* (1980), in which the eponymous character's deformed features are marked by a "grotesque protophallic protuberance on his forehead" (48). For Zizek, the "incestuous enjoyment" which eludes symbolic representation is associated with the pre-oedipal, or pre-mirror stage 'maternal' relation, during which the subject jubilates in the illusion of an impossible fusion, of a dyadic completeness, with the m/other. In Lynch's diegetic universe, by contrast, it is necessary to come to terms with the significance of the imagistic 'sliding' (one can perhaps speak here of a 'sliding' of the Metzian imaginary signifier) between the boy's face and the amorphous one.

There are at least two important observations to be made at this point. First, the significance of the boy is *precisely that he is a boy*. In other words, the wearer of the 'phallic mask' situated at the point of patriarchal identification is

prepubescent. Whereas in the patriarchal imaginary the bearer of the phallus must be figured as a virile, 'masculine', desiring agency, in the Lynchian-Lacanian real we are presented with a figure whose 'real phallus', so to speak, could not possibly live up to this characterization. The Lynchian phallus, in other words, as would evidently please Judith Butler, is inherently transferable from the body of the imaginary patriarch. Second, as demonstrated by the film itself, it is clear that the boy's innocent, benevolent face may be substituted by an ugly, distorted, amorphous one. This second face suggests the emergence of the disruptive real which phallic identification is intended, precisely, to mask and to disavow. The real of enjoyment signified by the disgusting figure behind the mask betrays the fact that underneath the seemingly innocuous functioning of the patriarchally identified symbolic network lies the impossible, incestuous pleasure of *jouissance*.

At a later point in "Grimaces of the Real," Zizek attempts to elucidate the "'secret' behind the mask" (58). As discussed by Lacan in "The Meaning of the Phallus,"[18] this 'secret' is in fact the revealed phallus, the phallus which has not been sublated (the Hegelian *aufgehoben*) in the signifier. Lacan implies that the phallus which has been unveiled is the phallus which does not work. In Zizek's words, "the revealed phallus, the phallic-anamorphotic distortion of the face, is a kind of brand attesting that the subject is caught in the desire of the other (mother), entrapped in her dream" (58). Whereas the veiled, 'paternal' phallus is the one according to which the subject must organize its desire, the revealed, 'maternal' one is an object of revulsion, of traumatic *jouissance*. In other words, the phallic function in Lacan is eminently ambivalent. In order to operate as the signifier of desire, the phallus must mask its obscene involvement in surplus enjoyment. Once the signifier is unmasked, however, this incestuous obscenity is revealed for all to see.

Although Zizek, in characteristic fashion, does not extrapolate upon these notions in order to uncover their significance as regards gender,[19] the figuration of the phallus in *Fire Walk With Me* allows me to do precisely this. For Lacan, the subject position of the 'masculine' (which does not necessarily coincide with the 'male subject') constitutes itself in a relation of 'having' *vis-à-vis* the signifier of desire. As is the case with all forms of identification in Lacan, however, the 'masculine' appropriation of the phallus is fundamentally illusory, for it masks the obscene real of enjoyment which 'returns from the dead', so to speak, to disrupt the specular stability and dyadism of the male subject's identification.

Whereas the *jouissance* occluded by phallic identification is thematized in Zizek by a sadistic maternal superego associated in Hitchcock's films with actual maternal figures,[20] we are made aware as spectators of Lynch's filmic text that, thankfully, this is not the case with *Fire Walk With Me*. In other words, if the incestuous relation at work in Zizek is the male subject's erotic encounter with the/his mother, then obscene *jouissance* in Lynch is embodied in the male subject's *repeated rape of the daughter*, that is to say, in Leland/Bob's incestuous intercourse with Laura. In this sense, Zizek's figuration of traumatic enjoyment with the

(literalized) body of the mother is translated by the Lynchian enunciator as (literalized) *paternal sexual aggression*.[21] It follows that the Name-of-the-Father which inaugurates and emblematizes the subject's entry into culture is revealed to hide the father's sexual violation of his daughter's body. In other words, the 'return of the 'mother's' body which haunts the discourse of the patriarch is shown to stem from the patriarch's own *desire to violate the incest taboo*.

To recapitulate, identification with the veiled phallus, the phallic signifier, seeks to mask the 'maternal phallus', the phallus of nondifferentiation, of *jouissance*, of the incestuous relation. This 'maternal' phallus is signified in the film by the 'monster behind the mask'. The return of the repressed in the Lynchian diegetic space occurs in the 'weird' sequences when the boy behind the mask turns into his opposite: an ugly, wrinkled, amorphous, distorted and repellent creature. Hence, phallic identification functions to veil the incestuous relationship upon which it is based but, contrary to Zizek's reading of Hitchcock, this relationship in Lynch is not that of the male subject's erotic relation with the mother or maternal figure, but that of the patriarchal father's incestual encounter with his own daughter.

The pre-oedipal stage of orthodox psychoanalysis is thereby shown by the Lynchian enunciator to rest upon a much more disturbing and 'perverted' incestuous desire, grounded upon the inability of the male subject to deal with his daughter's developing sexuality, and a resulting violent jealousy which ultimately culminates in her brutal murder. Whereas the prohibition emblematic of the subject's acculturation alludes in Freud to the mythic enjoyment of the father of the primal horde, in Lynch it is revealed that the patriarch's identification with discursive mastery functions to mask the father's *actual rape of his daughter*. In this manner, Lynch's film makes a radically subversive comment on the structure of the patriarchal imaginary; far from designating a phantasized time during which access to enjoyment was complete and unimpeded, the correlative of 'masculine' phallic identification is here shown to be indissociable from murderous paternalist rage.

4. The Phallus Is a Ring

In order to characterize Laura Palmer's victimization as an effect of Leland's phallic identification, however, it is necessary to establish the iconic figuration of the phallus within the film's diegesis and its relation to Laura's phantasy. The phallus is signified in *Fire Walk With Me* by a gold ring crowned by a large, transluscent green gem. This ring functions in the manner of the Lacanian *point de capiton*; it is the site of a chain of overdetermined meanings which link the film's various figurations of the real. The initial appearance of the ring in the film coincides with the disappearance of Agent Desmond. While investigating the trailer park where Teresa Banks resided, he is mystically attracted to another

trailer owned, as the viewer later discovers, by the old woman and grandson who link the 'normal' diegetic space of the film to the sequences of the real.

The sequence depicting Desmond's investigation of the Teresa Banks murder is distinguished by shots of electrical and telephone wires which dot the trailer park, as well as an eerie, pronounced beeping on the soundtrack visually associated with these wires. These shots are reminiscent of the images of television 'snow' and other motifs evoking electricity in the film's sequences of the real.[22] The highlight of the sequence of concern to me here occurs as Desmond reaches underneath the trailer. At this point there is a close-up shot of the ring placed at the top of a mound of dirt in the trailer's shadow. A long shot follows showing once again Desmond's crouched body about to make contact with the sparkling object. At this precise moment, however, the frame freezes, capturing the moment just prior to Desmond's contact with the mysterious ring. The screen then fades to black, marking the conclusion of the film's prologue. Soon afterwards, the viewer learns that Agent Desmond has inexplicably 'disappeared'.

The phallic ring again gains prominence during one of Laura's dream sequences. This sequence develops from a painting on her bedroom wall given to her by the old lady and her grandson, the wearer of the phallic mask. The painting depicts an open door which leads into an unseen, brightly lit room. The dream sequence is framed by shots of Laura asleep in her bed; it is made abundantly clear, in other words, that what the spectator witnesses during these moments clearly belongs in Laura's phantasy space. Yet this space is also permeated with images derived from the film's previous sequences of the real such as the red curtain, the grandson, and the red room. Of course, these images were not sutured to any character's point of view when previously seen. We find here one of the first of many techniques used by the film to confuse and conflate the 'objective' sequences of the real with those which are associated with a particular character's phantasy, in this case Laura's.

Laura's dream takes her 'into the picture', so to speak. A dolly shot, suggesting the point of view of a walking subject (which we associate with the dreaming Laura), penetrates into the space of the painting. The viewer is eventually led by the old woman and her grandson to the infamous red room which, in previous sequences and in the television series, was associated with both the sequences of the real which emerge 'from nowhere', and Agent Cooper's phantasmatic subjectivity. Still within the context of Laura's dream, the spectator is shown a beautiful, gold pillar upon which is displayed the green, phallic ring. The dancing dwarf and Agent Cooper are present in this sequence. When Cooper asks about the dwarf's identity, the latter announces, in distorted speech, that he is "the arm." This "arm" which the dwarf "is" alludes to the medically inexplicable paralysis experienced in her left arm by Teresa Banks during the days before her murder, as well as to the missing limb of Mike, the "one-armed man." When Laura 'sees herself' awake in her bed during her own dream, she is unable to move her left arm. The "one armed man" of the television series, as I will explain, appears later

during the film as the messenger from the real who attempts to communicate to Laura the identity of her rapist. Thus, it is by means of the motif of paralysis that the film associates the murder of Teresa Banks, Laura Palmer's dream, and the incriminating figure who leads Laura to the realization of the identity of her rapist. As I will show, the paralysis/ missing limb motif suggests the castration and bodily anarchy of the Lacanian *infans* in front of the mirror before its identificatory jubilation.

To move back to Laura's dream for a moment, Agent Cooper responds to the dwarf's divulgence of his identity by looking into the camera and advising the addressee not to "take the ring." Cooper's address of the audience at this point of Laura's dream functions to underline the extent to which the spectatorial subject has been sutured to Laura's phantasmatic look. Cooper's words are of course directed at Laura (as spectator, I am 'unable to take the ring'); yet, Cooper is *looking at me* when he says these words: I am being interpellated by the filmic enunciator *as Laura*. In other words, even though the film's enunciation makes it perfectly clear that these sequences belong to the dreaming Laura, the spectator is led to identify with the images as if they were its own. Because of the previous castration I have discussed at the initial moment of the film, the affective dimension for the spectator of Laura's ultimate victimization is rendered more intense.

It is possible to shed light upon this dense, seemingly nonsensical web of allusions by reading Laura's dream in terms of the Lacanian real. In the shots of Laura 'awake during her dream', she opens her clenched fist to find, horrified, that she has indeed taken the ring. Outside of the frame of the dream sequence, that is to say when Laura 'really wakes up', she 'once again' opens her clenched fist to discover that her hand is empty, that her taking of the ring was 'just a dream'. Still, such a reading ignores, as previously mentioned, the lengths to which the filmic enunciator has gone to conflate dream-reality with the film's 'regular' diegetic space. During the first sequence of the real analyzed above, the viewer is informed by an acousmatic,[23] extradiegetic voice that "we live inside a dream"; in a related way, through the conflation of Laura's 'dream-space inside the painting' with the 'real space' of her bedroom, Laura 'sees herself dreaming': she sees her own figure in the painting while she is ostensibly still in her room. The elucidation of this dense and complex sequence would require a close, shot-by-shot analysis, and this would exceed the scope of the present chapter. Suffice it to say at this point that, if Laura wakes up to discover that her taking of the ring was 'just a dream', it must be said that the entire film is structured in such a fashion as to place radically the dream/ reality binarism between parentheses.

It is clear that the picture on Laura's bedroom wall functions as a mirror in which she "sees herself seeing herself" dreaming, to modify slightly Lacan's well-known axiom.[24] Both Laura's and Teresa's paralyses before the mirror may also be related to the Lacanian infans who *uses its mirror image* in order to consolidate jubilantly its imperfect motor control. The ring, in this sense, functions as the

icon of phallic identification, as the emblematization of the subject's self-unification and self-identification on the screen of culture. It follows that the warning Cooper addresses to Laura not to "take the ring" or, more precisely, not to perform the act of identification necessary to ground the subject in culture, *is impossible*. Phantasmatically, Laura effectuates her phallic identification by taking the ring *precisely because she has no choice*. Lynch's film suggests that the alternative to the taking of the ring is the bodily paralysis reminiscent of the pre-unified Lacanian subject. In other words, in order to constitute herself as a functioning, viable subject in culture, Laura is forced to *identify with the phallic icon*; she thereby has no choice but to be sutured to the baggage associated with the process of identification in a misogynistic imaginary.

In fact, it could even be said that the significance of the viewer's realization that Laura never sees herself taking the ring lies in the fact that the subject's primary identification *has always already taken place*. The alternative to Laura's taking of the ring is the motor fragmentation reminiscent of the Lacanian *corps morcelé* and signified by the paralysis of her left arm during the dream. The subversive edge of the Lynchian enunciator emerges *precisely at this moment*, for I know, as a spectator, that the phallic mask iconically figured by the ring hides the repressed underside of the patriarchal imaginary: paternal sexual violence. In order to "see herself seeing herself", in order to acquire the egoic mastery necessary to avoid psychosis, Laura is forced to introject the 'baggage' associated with the paternal function: the inability of the phallically identified male subject to repress completely the traces of *incestuous jouissance*, of 'maternal' surplus enjoyment. Of course, the anxiety which results from this inadequacy manifests itself during Leland's repeated and violent rapes of his daughter.

With her acceptance of the ring, Laura assumes the 'feminine' identification which the patriarchal imaginary forces upon her. The filmic enunciator in fact suggests that if there is an alternative to Laura's identification, it is embodied in the character of Donna, Laura's naive, cloistered *Doppelgänger* who finds her virginal condition so unbearable that she follows Laura into the 'pink room', site of the drunken/ stoned orgy which occurs the night before the murder. It is no coincidence that it is precisely after Laura's acceptance of the ring that her involvement in the illicit underworld of Twin Peaks assumes its greatest importance. It is at this point that Laura goes to the "Bang Bang Bar," prostitutes herself, and accompanies her john to the orgiastic 'pink room'.

Just before she enters the bar, there is a shot of Laura looking at her own reflection in the glass of the bar door. The image of herself reflected back to her by the patriarchal imaginary is that of a dejected, victimized, cynical woman whose only choice is to sell her body in a futile attempt to survive in an intolerable world. Introducing herself to her client with the question "so you wanna fuck the homecoming queen?" the viewer watches, sutured to Donna's look, as Laura assumes her 'function' as sexual commodity, as temptress, as 'loose woman'.[25] As we listen in on Laura's conversations from Donna's point of view, we experience

vicariously Donna's horror at her friend's victimization. At the same time, however, we realize how Donna finds herself in an equally intolerable situation. It is in this sense that Laura's 'objectively' humiliating behaviour assumes an aura of glamour through the mechanism of the spectator's suture to Donna's look. The view of 'femininity' posited by *Fire Walk with Me* emerges most clearly at this point. Given the structure of the patriarchal imaginary, one must, as a woman, either function as the sexually provocative, commodified temptress signified by the 'bad' Laura before her murder, or the virtuous, pre-sexed virgin embodied in the character of the 'good' Donna before her perversion by the orgy in the pink room.[26]

The point at which the underside of the phallic function is betrayed most obviously during the film occurs when Leland and Laura are driving along a road, followed by Mike, the "one-armed man." Previously, when Leland picked up Laura at Donna's house where the two women had sought refuge from the previous night's drunken anarchy, Leland showed extreme discomfort at Laura's and Donna's intimacy, an intimacy which has arguably been eroticized at previous points in the film. As Leland and Laura are held up at a crosswalk, Mike approaches them in his truck and begins to shout obscure, senseless messages above the din of Leland's car engine. Leland is here faced with the protuberance of the real; he attempts not to hear the one-armed man's message (and shields Laura from it) by revving his engine and honking his horn. Furious, the one-armed man points a finger at Leland, a finger sporting the green phallic ring, and then yells out the incriminating "it's your father!"

The one-armed man's speech has barely been audible for the viewer, and the incrimating message only just manages to be understood despite the cacaphony of Leland's car engine. In "Grimaces of the Real," Slavoj Zizek borrows Michel Chion's notion of the *voix acousmatique*, an "impossible, originally bodiless" extradiegetic noise (48), to describe the voice *qua* object, the voice which emerges from the real to remind the subject traumatically of its reliance upon the substance of the obcene object, of the disgusting Thing.

> It is no accident that, in his *Seminar XI* [*The Four Fundamental Concepts*], Lacan determines the object small *a* as the bone that got stuck in the subject's throat. If the exemplary case of the gaze qua object is a blind man's eyes, eyes which *do not see*, then the exemplary case of the voice qua object is a voice that remains silent, a voice that we *do not hear*. (49)

As spectators, we are sutured during this sequence to Leland's 'interior' look; we witness the rush of memories brought on by the disruptive return of the real signified by Mike's virtually incomprehensible *voix acousmatique*. Each of Leland's memories designates a particular aspect of the repressed underside his phallic identification is desperately struggling to conceal. For example, we hear Leland's voice explain that Teresa Banks "looks just like [his] Laura." We watch him in bed

with this woman whom he eventually kills. Leland's chance discovery the next morning of Laura and Ronette Polaski together in another room at the same motel is another example of the 'lesbian threat' which haunts both Leland's imaginary and, on a larger level, that of patriarchal culture in general. During the pink room sequence, Laura asks Ronette while both are in an intoxicated stupor "what else they did together" on a previous night neither of them clearly remembers. The pink room is also frequented by topless leather-clad women who dance erotically with each other. As previously mentioned, the sequences depicting Laura's and Donna's emotional intimacy are not without hints of homoeroticism. The threat of lesbian eroticism, of a feminine sexuality expressed outside of the patriarch's colonizing look, is thus an integral part of the fascinating/ repulsive underside of 'masculine' identification.

Mike's partially heard *voix acousmatique* functions in this manner as a condensation of all those elements which need to be repressed in order to maintain the illusion of the patriarchal male subject's appropriative identification with the phallus. Given Zizek's distinction between the heard voice (the voice *qua* law, the paternal metaphor, the phallus *aufgehoben* [sublated] in the signifier) and the unheard voice (the voice *qua* object of real enjoyment), it is possible to speculate that Mike's impassioned shouting corresponds in Leland's phantasy space to the mute articulation of the impossible-real *jouissance* of the incestual relation. Leland must struggle to keep veiled the *objet petit a* because it may potentially 'give away' his desire to violate the law, which is here literalized in the Lynchian context as the law of the incest taboo. It is precisely the desperate veiling of the phallus, the silencing of the *voix acousmatique* from Laura's anxious ear, which manifests Leland's desire *qua* patriarch to at once signify and violate the incest taboo.

It is interesting to note, however, that whereas Zizek's discussion of the voice of the real in his analysis hinges upon the Phantom of the Opera's desire for the Thing-voice of the mother, in Lynch we find a 'perversion' of the incest taboo. The tabooed object is no longer the male subject's mother or sister, but *his daughter*.[27] More precisely, the unveiling of the phallus, figured in the filmic discourse as the one-armed man's display of the green ring, reveals that the father's perverted enjoyment is in reality not perverted at all, insofar as the father's perversion (the Lacanian *père-version*) constitutes the (impossible) male desire which structures patrarchal culture and which is masked by the 'raising', by the veiling, of the phallus.

In other words, *Fire Walk with Me* makes the claim that the mythical paternal perversion in the primal horde is in fact indissociable from the structure of the patriarchal imaginary; the father's desire for perverted enjoyment is the 'logical', 'natural' flipside of his phallic identification. Hence, it is not at all surprising that in Leland's phantasy, when he is leaving the motel in which he has had sex with Teresa Banks, the grandson figure appears behind him wearing the phallic mask, and proceeds to do a bizarre, circular, jumping dance behind the

retreating Leland. The agitation of the phallus designated by the grandson's dance gives away the precarious fine line which separates the law from its violation and allows Leland to enjoy at once his patriarchal privileges in the symbolic network and sex with Laura's *Doppelgänger*.

Because the intrusion of the real figured by the shouting one-armed man is so disturbing to Leland in this instance, it shows that his incestuous phallic identification constitutes the imaginary hinge upon which the patriarchal symbolic, the androcentric Other, swings: this identification functions to simultaneously emblematize the taboo against father-daughter incest and to consolidate the patriarch's control and enjoyment of his daughter's sexuality (which dangerously tends towards 'perverted' lesbianism). In the return of the real of Mike's *voix acousmatique*, the viewer, sutured to Leland's phantasmatic look, is shown the disruptive effect of *precisely what is repressed by this phantasy*, the phantasy which structures the diegetic universe of *Fire Walk With Me* and which attributes the cast of tragic inevitability to Laura's fatal victimization.

In this sense, Laura's paranormal phantasy of Bob functions to mask the much more disturbing, otherwise hidden, reality of systematized patriarchal violence against women's bodies. At the conclusion of the sequence depicting Laura's identification *vis-à-vis* the phallic ring, when Laura finds herself alone in her room, the viewer witnesses how she phantasmatically puts everything together. Just prior to this moment, the spectator partook of Leland's own recollection of his murder of Teresa Banks, during which it is revealed that the scream heard during the opening credit sequence is in fact Teresa Banks's scream at her final moment. The film then shows shots of the green ring on the finger of both the one-armed man and Teresa Banks, shots which are sutured to Laura's point of view. During the penultimate, gruesome murder scene, Laura herself puts on the green ring moments before she is repeatedly stabbed by her father.

Clearly, the viewer establishes in retrospect that Laura's discovery of the ring in her hand during her dream was a prefiguration of her own 'inevitable' death. As previously established, Laura's taking of the ring during her dream sequence signified a repetition of the act of primary identification constitutive of subjectivation; in other words, Laura's options are to either identify in relation to the phallus, and therefore succumb to the effects of the patriarchal imaginary, or else not become subjectivized at all. Still, the final, horrific images of the film underline the implication of the phallic ring in Laura's ultimately fatal victimization. In this lies Lynch's bitingly harsh critique of patriarchal culture: the end result of, the necessary conclusion to, the logic of patriarchy is the famous image with which the television series begins - the close-up of Laura Palmer's face, hypothermically blue and uncannily beautiful, after the plastic in which she has been wrapped by her father is removed.

Fire Walk with Me depicts the impossibility for the subject to sustain the identification constitutive of phallic masculinity; the film also reveals the subsequent misogynist violence which results from the phallic subject's inability to

access *jouissance*. In other words, phallic identification is fundamentally, primordially split. Although the identification with the phallus *qua* signifier of masculinist privilege subtends the male subject's access to enjoyment, the return of the real ensures that this impossible enjoyment lies perpetually out of reach. As a result, the phallic male lashes out against the imagined *jouissance* of the other, in this instance figured by the daughter's sexuality. *Fire Walk with Me* may therefore be viewed as an extremely dark depiction of the fate of women in a society anchored by a patriarchal imaginary. Forever haunted by the threat of vengeful masculinist violence, the female subject is condemned to 'mysticism': the phantasy of a *jouissance* "beyond the phallus," beyond the grave, signified in Lynch's film by the concluding shot of Laura Palmer's visitation by an angel.

Notes

1 I use this term here as elsewhere in its psychoanalytic sense, as theorized, for example, by Raymond Bellour in his "Hitchcock: The Enunciator." For the sake of clarification, I refer at this point of my argument to the filmic enunciator as the cinematic agency whose function is to ground the spectator's 'control' of the image, that is to say its illusion that the filmic images emerge from its own phantasmatic space. As implied in the main body of the text, I am using the term "enunciator" to designate the agency embodied in/ constructed by the filmic text, an agency related, but not reducible, to the director.

2 A wide range of reviewers condemned Lynch when the film was first released theatrically on the grounds of excessive violence, inaccessibility, lack of creative restraint, and intensely disturbing imagery. It would be a fascinating project to study the response of a wide range of critics to the film in order to theorize the intensity of this visceral, negative reaction. In none of the reviews I remember reading in the mass print media was the question of incest broached, nor was the idea that the film may in fact have an at least partially political motivation. I would suggest that what is made manifest here is a kind of mass repression, an intensely disturbing (from my perspective), quasi-psychotic foreclosure, by which the radically unsettling implications of the film are dismissed on the basis of its violence and so-called "self-indulgence."

3 "Il n'y a pas, au fond, de solution de continuité entre le jeu de l'enfant au miroir et, à l'autre bout, certaines figures localisées des codes cinématographiques." Metz, *Le signifiant imaginaire*, p. 78-79.

4 Jacques-Alain Miller, "Extimité," p. 121.

5 Zizek uses this expression to designate the ineffability of that certain something in the object which remains unsignifable despite all attempts at description. It is precisely this object which attributes to the object the sublime attractiveness characteristic of the love relationship. See *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, pp. 95, 180.

6 Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, p. 48. Further references are incorporated into the text.

7 Basing her discussion upon Lacan's differentiation in *Séminaire XI* between *l'oeil* and *le regard*, Kaja Silverman makes an important theoretical distinction, which I am using here, between the look and the gaze, one which provides a long-needed rectification of the false attribution of the gaze to the male subject theorized by many feminist film scholars. While the gaze is characterized by its fundamental otherness in relation to the subject, the look remains inscribed in the circuit of desire. On the Lacanian view of the scopic field, the subject's look is marked by its attribution of visual omnipotence to a point which remains unseen; the look is always exceeded at the point of the picture which appears to the subject to 'look back'. As I will discuss in a later section, this point of the Other's gaze is figured on the picture as the anamorphotic spot, or stain (*tache*): "Nul besoin de nous reporter à je ne sais quelle supposition de l'existence d'un voyant universel. Si la fonction de la tache est reconnue dans son autonomie et est identifiée à celle du regard, nous pouvons en chercher la menée, le fil, la trace à tous les étages de la constitution du monde dans le champ scopique. On s'apercevra alors que la fonction de la tache et du regard y est à la fois ce qui le commande le plus secrètement, et ce qui *échappe toujours à la saisie de cette forme de la vision* qui se satisfait d'elle-même en s'imaginant comme conscience" (emphasis added). See Lacan, *Séminaire XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, p. 71. Silverman's appropriation of Lacan's delineation of the scopic field for her analysis of the cinema of Fassbinder may be found in "Fassbinder and Lacan: A Reconsideration of Gaze, Look, and Image," *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, pp. 129-130. Lacan elaborates on the mechanisms of *l'oeil* and *le regard* in "La ligne et la lumière," *Séminaire XI*, pp. 85-96. Joan Copjec discusses misreadings of the Lacanian gaze in film theory in "Cutting Up," pp. 228-230.

8 The literature on the process of suturing in the cinema is by now abundant. However, one may perhaps state that the pioneering articles on this topic are Miller's simply titled "Suture" and Heath's "Notes on Suture."

9 Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics*, p. 195. Further references are incorporated into the text.

10 Silverman's appropriation of Althusser is based on his famous essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses."

11 Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics*, p. 217.

12 Lacan theorizes the significance of the anamorphotic spot in *Séminaire XI* in the section entitled, appropriately, "L'anamorphose." Lacan alludes to Holbein's painting *The Ambassadors* to illustrate his point that any picture features a region, a stain, which appears to be out of focus, as if, in order to be correctly viewed, one would need to place oneself elsewhere. For Lacan, anamorphosis serves as a signifier for the viewing subject's inadequate take on the scopic field, thereby pointing to the agency of the gaze of the Other which, even though continually 'felt' by the subject, is never situated at the point at which the subject's look is focused. As we shall see in a forthcoming section of this paper, the protuberances of the real in Lynch's diegetic universe tend to emerge precisely from such anamorphotic spots.

13 Slavoj Zizek, "The Object as a Limit of Discourse: Approaches to the Lacanian Real," p. 102. Further references to this article are incorporated into the text.

14 It is precisely this Freudian Thing which Lacan, literally, allows to speak in "La chose freudienne," *Écrits*, pp. 408-411.

15 The translation of Lynch's surreal imagery into language is a difficult one. By "sequences of the real," however, I wish to designate those moments in Lynch's *oeuvre*, often, but not always, associated with a character's dreams or phantasies, which protrude from the 'normal', everyday diegesis of his films. The sequences in question often depict phenomena which would ordinarily be considered supernatural or paranormal. Lynch relies upon innovative sound and image manipulation to attribute to these sequences their indescribable, otherworldly character. An example would be the technique used by Lynch to achieve the distorted speech of the dancing dwarf and other figures inhabiting the red room. He first has the actor articulate his/ her lines as they would sound if spoken backwards, and then plays the recording of these mispronounced words backwards in order to arrive at something which resembles, but differs from, ordinary speech. In "Grimaces of the Real," Zizek refers to the cut-off ear sequence in *Blue Velvet* and the close-ups of lighted cigarettes and raging fires in *Wild at Heart* as examples of the filmmaker's depictions of the real (59).

16 Given the undeniable idiosyncrasy of Lynch's style, in particular in the instances of what I have termed his "sequences of the real," it is useful to speculate upon the notion of 'Lynchness' as perceived by the popular consciousness and the effects of this consciousness upon the theory of enunciation and the Benvenistian distinction between *discours* and *histoire*. As suggested to me in conversation by Martin Lefebvre, it is possible that Lynch's sequences of the real function in a manner analogous to the linguistic markers of enunciation. In other words, the presence of the enunciator in *Fire Walk with Me* is probably no more evident than during the sequences of the real in question, which the spectator identifies with the presence of the director behind the images, thereby constituting what it sees as *discours* (as an utterance bearing the explicit trace of the speaker). In this sense, Lynch's sequences of the real function as indices for the spectator of Lynch *qua* auteur, in a manner which recalls Raymond Bellour's analysis of Hitchcock's trademark technique in "Hitchcock, the Enunciator." This point has interesting implications in relation to the theorization of the real in Lacan. If the figure of Lynch *qua* filmic enunciator is imagistically associated in the popular consciousness with the disturbing experience of the real, with the memory of Laura Palmer's tragic and disturbing fate, then the sudden disappearance of the figure of Lynch from the mass media subsequent to the release of the film in question acquires new meaning. Insofar as the public perception of Lynch as source of these disturbing images functions for the subject, psychoanalytically speaking, as the return of the real, it makes abundant sense that this figure would be repressed, shunned, outcast, in order to avoid future traumatic encounters. In this sense, the contrast between the public's initial fascination with the television series and the sudden disappearance of Lynch from the mass media (when both the identity of Bob was revealed and the more uncompromising film prologue was released) aquires new significance.

17 Slavoj Zizek, "Grimaces of the Real, or When the Phallus Appears," p. 47. Further references to this article are incorporated into the text.

18 Jacqueline Rose's translation of this part of the seminar may be found in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne*.

19 Thankfully, as I have briefly discussed in the previous chapter, Slavoj Zizek has clarified his position in relation to feminism in his most recent work, *Tarrying with the Negative*. As also indicated in Chapter 3, this last book contains a challenging chapter which attempts to explicate Lacan's notoriously difficult "fomulae of sexuation" by means of a rereading of the Kantian category of the sublime. In addition, near the conclusion of the book, Zizek briefly extrapolates, in a self-consciously feminist manner, upon Lacan's pronouncements on women ("*la femme n'existe pas*"). He argues for the greater usefulness for feminism of the

(Lacanian) psychoanalytic view of sexual difference in comparison to Judith Butler's ground-breaking and much-cited (Derridean/Foucaultian) theorization of gender as citation. In general, as revealed in most of the present work, I find the psychoanalytic theorization of gender to be the most useful one for feminist and queer political intervention, and Zizek's elaborations of Lacan's pronouncements on sexual difference are helpful and elucidating. In sum, there is much in the most recent Zizek which may be usefully appropriated by feminism and queer theory, and it is precisely this which I have attempted to do in Chapter 3. Still, it must be said that Zizek's rhetorical strategies in his earlier works, especially in *Looking Awry*, function in none too subtle a manner to interpellate the reader as male and heterosexual. For example, when Zizek says, in his analysis of the function of the *femme fatale* in *film noir*, that it is "Woman as object of fascination that causes *us* to lose our sense of judgment and moral attitude," it is all too clear that he does not have lesbians, bisexuals, or gay men in mind. See *Looking Awry*, p. 66. Zizek's brief criticism of Judith Butler may be found in *Tarrying with the Negative*, pp. 128-129.

20 Zizek elucidates the nature of the sadistic maternal superego in his discussion of Hitchcock in *Looking Awry* (97-103). Although Zizek takes care at several points in his analysis to place the adjective 'maternal' between quotation marks, thereby severing the essential link posited by some strands of psychoanalytic theory between the sadistic superego and the oedipal mother, this distinction established by Zizek sometimes breaks down. During these moments, Zizek implies that the sadistic superego is essentially related to 'femininity', viewed as a character of the female subject's 'maternal' essence. Despite Zizek's attempt to offer a gynophilic account of the maternal superego in Hitchcock, he makes it insufficiently clear that his nostalgia for the return of the "paternal function" (99) does not refer to the 'lost' authority of the patriarchal head of the nuclear family.

21 Ellie Ragland-Sullivan has made the connection between the subject's enjoyment of the remnants of maternal *jouissance* and the aggressive instinct. "Lacan's phallic signifier points to a jouissance beyond desire that links human subjects to unconscious masochism and to a death drive. If, as Lacan claimed, all subjects who are not psychotic possess an unconscious set of identifications with a signifier for the name of the father, then a given subject's unconscious position toward the phallic signifier may well occasion intense narcissistic or aggressive responses at the ego level." The subversive edge of the patriarchal phallic relation as depicted in the Lynch film consists in the homocidal and incestuous nature of this aggressive response. See Ragland-Sullivan, "Seeking the Third Term," p. 46.

22 During the first sequence of the real discussed above, there is in fact a striking, negative close-up of an opened mouth which utters in distorted, fragmented speech the word "electricity."

23 Michel Chion's notion of *la voix acousmatique* is discussed in relation to *Fire Walk With Me* at a later point in this paper, and is developed in his book *La voix au cinéma*.

24 The phrase "*seeing oneself see oneself*" ("*se voir se voir*") is used by Lacan to characterize the narcissistic phantasy in which the gaze is elided. In other words, it is precisely the function of the phantasy to structure a relation of the subject to the object which renders invisible the point on the picture which remains out of focus. In this manner, the subject consoles itself by hallucinating the object at the point in its vision which remains beyond its grasp. See *Séminaire XI*, pp. 76-78.

25 It is useful to refer here to Luce Irigaray's work on the patriarchally identified symbolic and the exchange of women, which she refers to as the reign of "hom(m)osexualité." For Irigaray, "les corps des femmes assurent - de leur usage, de leur consommation, de leur circulation - la condition de possibilité de la société et de la culture mais qu'ils restent une « infrastructure » méconnue de leur élaboration." Although Irigaray at no point in this essay refers to Lacan, it is abundantly clear that her Marxo-psychoanalytic theorization is indebted to the Lacanian notion of surplus enjoyment derived from the subject's relation to the *objet petit a*. The effectiveness of Irigaray's analysis derives from her distanciation from the *lieu commun* of the symbolic register *qua* patriarchal structure. Instead, Irigaray insists upon the phantasmatic, specular status of woman *qua* object of exchange, 'object' being used here in its strict psychoanalytic sense. In the context of my argument, the significance of Irigaray arises from the idea that the image in which Laura recognizes herself is precisely the patriarchal subject's phantasy of woman *qua* object, as the Lacanian Woman (~~*La*~~ *femme*) who does not exist. See Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*, p. 167.

26 It is worthwhile speculating about the significance of Lynch's choice to film the pink room sequence with high-frequency strobe-effect lighting. The 'pink room' refers to a log cabin outside the town of Twin Peaks in which drunken and stoned (male) revellers indulge in the sexual favours of a parade of leather- and feather-clad prostitutes. In short, it is a kind of small-town brothel/ party house. While certain shots feature a dizzying circular camera movement suggesting Donna's drunken point of view, others are characterized by a detached, documentary-like immobile 'objectivity' capturing the activities in the pink room from a non-specified, impersonal point in space. In "Qu'est-ce qu'un tableau," Lacan describes the agency of the gaze in the field of the Other as a point of light

in the anamorphotic stain which constitutes the subject as an effect of the line of light passing through the screen of culture: "ce qui me détermine foncièrement dans le visible, c'est le regard qui est au-dehors. C'est par le regard que j'entre dans la lumière, et c'est du regard que j'en reçois l'effet. D'où il ressort que le regard est l'instrument par où la lumière s'incarne, et par où [...] je suis *photo-graphié*." Lacan is suggesting here that the subject is rendered visible in the scopic field by a line of light beyond the subject's look which by definition passes through the screen of culture: through, in other words, the patriarchal imaginary. Consequently, the subject is *written* as an effect of the distortions occasioned by phallic identification. In the pink room sequence, the camera stands in for the gaze of the Other (which is sutured in the male subject's phantasy to his look), and the strobe-light effect emblematizes the process of the "photo-graph." It is for this reason that the sexual 'availability' of the prostitutes in the sequence is so clearly on display; even the 'lesbian' elements are offered up to the scopic pleasure of the phallically identified patriarchal subject.

27 It would perhaps be wise at this point not to rule out the possibility that Laura, in effect, functions as mother-substitute in Leland's phantasy. In this instance, there would of course be no "subversion" of the Freudian oedipal narrative. Nevertheless, the more fundamental point is perhaps that, regardless of Laura's 'position' in Leland's phantasy, *Fire Walk with Me* shows how the structure of the Oedipus/ incest taboo colludes with the father's incestuous surplus enjoyment. In other words, the taboo functions, paradoxically, to allow *precisely that which it prohibits*. It should be noted at this point that Lacan's rereading of the paternal function in Freud as *père-version* implies that the father's perverted enjoyment is mythical, that it may never happen, yet that the prohibition is paradoxically necessary in order to constitute the cultural field. In this sense, Leland's surplus enjoyment may appear to fall outside the oedipal framework. However, it is my contention that this is so only if one reads the incest taboo literally, that is to say as incestuous sexual relations. In other words, the point of *Fire Walk with Me* is that *the father's perversion is impossible*. It is precisely for this reason, because the father's access to enjoyment is always already barred, that the notion of Laura's sexuality, more precisely of the *jouissance* phantasmatically attributed to her by Leland, cannot be tolerated.

Conclusion

Using Lacan

Having arrived at what seems to be an end point, now that I have followed a particular cultural representation of the (imaginary) logic of sexual difference to its horrifying conclusion, I feel compelled to ask: *is that it?* If the psychoanalysis of gender allows us to penetrate beneath the phantasmatic structure of patriarchy in such a way that its murderous logic is brought to light, *then so what?* Does the death of Laura Palmer emblematize the *end point of psychoanalysis?* In the instance of the female or queer subject which has been the focus of my inquiry, is it correct to say that our ultimate, inescapable victimization is really *what psychoanalysis is all about?* Is its only use an *increased awareness of the mechanisms of oppression?* Now that we have figured out the logic of phantasy, *what next?*

The history of psychoanalysis is a psychoanalytic history. By this tautology I mean that psychoanalytic thought has from its inception been subjected to the very laws of repression and denial it seeks to elucidate. After Freud came the neo-Freudians; after Sigmund came Anna and Marie Bonaparte. Lacan's career, the very meaning of Lacan *qua* cultural figure, may be characterized by precisely this struggle to prevent the revolution from eating its children. But after Lacan came, precisely, *who?* Deleuze and Guattari?

Perhaps. If one is to take the recent work of Steven Shaviro, for example, as an archetypal symptom of *fin-de-siècle* psychoanalytic malaise, it would seem that it is precisely in the direction of schizoanalysis that theory's cultural fatigue with Lacan is manifesting itself. Hence, we encounter the emergence of "avoid Freud" rhetoric: the denial of the constitutive character of lack; the paradoxical assertion of the at once homo and transsexual molecularity of the libido; the reemergence of the compulsive theoretical slip which attributes to heterosexuality a symbolic determination; the ludicrous characterization of psychoanalysis as a covert and disguised humanist normativism; and, finally, the assumption of a 'postmodernist' position which emerges in the physical world as hyperglossy bibliofetishism and an obscene waste of paper.

Shaviro claims, after Deleuze and Guattari, that "*all desire is homosexual.*" But not exactly. We later read that molar heterosexuality conceals "a molecular world of transsexuality."[1] No longer are we all bisexual, but hermaphroditic. Now free of Freud's elaborate theoretical concoction by which an illusory lack was sutured to each and every one of us to prevent desire from running wild, the Deleuzo-Guattarian subject is able to transversally plug into elements of the desiring machine in all directions, and to shake off the yoke of oppression through the assumption of the schizo ideal.

Perhaps my subversive strategy of hyperbolic mimesis is not doing justice to Shaviro's claim. In all seriousness, the Deleuzo-Guattarian position makes a

seductive argument when it claims that theories of sex and gender require a more "revolutionary" framework than that of psychoanalysis, which is perceived to have an illicit investment in a heterosexually normative economy of desire. If we all just forgot that Oedipus complex, everything would be okay.

I want to argue, however, that it is precisely and paradoxically in this 'conservatism' of psychoanalysis where its true radical efficacy lies. I must admit that I am utterly flabbergasted that the rhetoric of revolution would choose to re-emerge, out of all possible options, at the end of the twentieth century. Surely one may find in the lessons of Hitlerianism, Stalinism and Maoism the truth of revolution's often genocidal illusion! Two decades after a period of sexual liberation supposedly designed to rid us of our illusions about sex and gender, we find these very same illusions returning with a vengeance. What does all of this mean?

What is not accounted for by schizoanalysis is the *persistence of the structure of the phantasy*. Wouldn't the world be a wonderful place if the schizo ideal were realizable? The error of 'postmodernist' positions such as Shaviro's is that they *repress the fundamental lessons of the twentieth century*: neither the logic of the imaginary (fascism) nor the idealization of the real (psychosis, schizophrenia) will get the speaking subject anywhere. The speaking subject *speaks*. If the desiring machine were a plausible option, if the subject could discard the object relation, *the human species would exterminate itself*. To this day, biochemical research cannot scientifically explain the persistence of human reproduction. In an age of advanced reproductive technology, why would anyone want to bother with a 'heterosexual relationship'? In short, it is precisely the logic of phantasy which accounts for the pathetic comedy of 'reproductive' heterosexuality. From a queer perspective, I feel compelled to say that *the world needs its deluded heterosexual subjects in order for there to be any world at all.*

Another fundamental illusion of the schizoanalyst consists in the claim that the 'conservatism' of psychoanalysis subtends the perpetuation of both the logic of patriarchy and the binarism of gender. However, it is one thing to say that one cannot assume a third gender, and another to assert that 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are immanent and intractable. Queer psychoanalysis resists the temptation to theorize a third, 'queer' or 'homosexual' gender precisely because it knows that any gender whatever is ultimately recircumscribed by one side or the other of the phallic signifier. If there is an ideal of gender, it is a modest one: the subject is 'a little bit feminine', ' a little bit masculine', 'a little bit transsexual', all to varying degrees. The challenge posed to the subject is to negotiate the conflicting demands of these 'positions' through the mediation of the signifier. The representative 'feminine' subject is Laura Palmer: she ends up dead at the prime of her youth. The representative 'masculine' subject is Leland Palmer: he is a murderer and a rapist. The 'transsexual' subject (not in the clinical, but the Deleuzo-Guattarian sense) requires anti-psychotic medication to deal with reality. The trick is distanciation through the technique of analysis. Any more

"revolutionary" strategy ultimately ends up colluding with the ideology of one gender or the other.

I would like to make one final note about Deleuze and Guattari. I believe that their appropriation of the psychiatric concept of schizophrenia is not an allegorical one. They genuinely believe that schizophrenia *qua* psychiatric, clinical condition is 'caused' by the effects of oedipal and capitalist structures. The theory of the schizo ideal amounts to a radical de-medicalization of the schizophrenic diagnosis. In other words, there is no 'chemical imbalance' involved in schizophrenia; or, if there is, it is directly attributable to oedipal, 'cultural' substrates. For those who know individuals who suffer from the horrors of schizophrenia, it is difficult to take this position seriously. It is also difficult not to become intensely angry.

Of course, the last thing I want to do is to come down on the side of psychiatry as opposed to that of psychoanalysis. I believe that our culture is at an eminently primitive stage when it comes to the institutionalization of the problems of so-called 'mental illness' and psychological 'therapy'. Commentators too often forget about Lacan's medical training. The tragedy of the institutionalization of psychiatry and psychoanalysis is that one is required to 'choose' between the one or the other.

The recent trend of Deleuzo-Guattarian discipleship is but another example of the mechanism through which the truth of the Freudian discovery is periodically repressed. If queer theory is to jump on this bandwagon, it may find itself dismissed as 'fashion' in the coming decades.

It is much more strategic, and eminently more subversive, to proclaim: *Freud is queer.*

Note

1 Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body*, pp. 75, 77.

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